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HALF-HOURS
OF
BLIND MAN'S HOLIDAY.

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HALF-HOURS
OF
BLIND MAN'S HOLIDAY

Or Summer and Winter Sketches

IN
BLACK AND WHITE

By W. W. FENN

'Those also serve who only stand and wait'

IN TWO VOLUMES
VOL. I.



LONDON
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As a few years have elapsed since many of the following articles were written, some details here and there may be a little out of date ; but it has been thought better to let them stand unaltered, as, in the main, they do not affect the subject dealt with.



HALF-HOURS

OF

BLIND MAN'S HOLIDAY.

MY OWN STORY.

FOURTEEN years ago a very puzzling problem was put before me, and in rather a startling fashion.

Up to the age of five-and-thirty life had been a pleasant happy thing enough—I enjoyed it, in fact. I was a landscape-painter, and in bright summer weather, when I could wander at will by mountain-side or river-bank, by ‘the melancholy marge of some neglected sea,’ or in the midst of yellow cornfields and shady lanes, and could set up my easel in the air whenever it pleased me, carrying off from it more or less successful work, with an equal yield of profit and pleasure, I did not acknowledge to myself that I dwelt in ‘a vale of tears.’

But there came a day when literally to me there was ‘no more splendour in the grass or glory in the flower;’ I became blind, and for a time was more dependent than the veriest child upon the care and guidance of others. My forced inaction was torture to me. What could I do? How could I so employ myself

as to make the remembrance of all that had been a dear delight, and not, as seemed inevitable in my first days of darkness, a heavy grief? How, in one word, was I to 'keep my memory green,' and to preserve my impressions of all the varied beauties of this outer world, which year by year, as the days lengthened and the skies grew clear, I had loved to gather up and perpetuate on paper or canvas? What could I do? That was the problem; and I believe that to the many dear friends who, in all the warmth of their ready comradeship and hearty sympathy, have clustered round me at home and in the dear old familiar smoking-room of our club, and brightened my evenings by their clever pleasant talk, I owe its solution.

• 'You have seen and observed somewhat in your past life,' they said to me, 'and as you have been forced to relinquish the brush, why not have recourse to the pen?'

I took counsel with myself, and determined to carry out their suggestions.

The following collection of stories and essays (all of which have appeared before in various periodicals) was, in part, the result.

Not without considerable difficulty, however, it must be confessed, did I succeed in persuading editors and publishers to consider my productions. From one magazine-office to another they went, sometimes 'declined,' very politely, 'with thanks;' sometimes retained, with a desire for 'more from the same pen;' often treated with cold and contemptuous disdain, which, by the bye, they very possibly deserved; and then again

the tide would turn, they would find favour, and speedily appear in print.

But before this little game of patience and perseverance was entered upon much had to be endured and overcome. I had to meet and do battle with the one great trouble of my life ; but, with reverence be it said, I won the day, nor to the last moment of my life can I ever forget that to the warm-hearted practical kindness of the best set of friends that ever rallied about a man in his time of sadness my victory was mainly due.

I had been a drawing-master as well as an artist, and was successful in both pursuits ; and, at the time when the sight of one eye gave way, was in the full swing of my career. I was not daunted by the first warning I received. 'It will be all right,' I thought. 'I must be careful, and not over-tax my eyes ; give up work for a time, take a thorough rest, and go to a good oculist.'


But before a year had passed, I could not hide from myself the fact that one eye was useless to me. Nevertheless I would not give in, and comforted myself by the knowledge that one eye was almost as good as two. And still for a time, even yet, neither my spirits nor my hopes gave way. I loved my art. It seemed to me that all I knew was what Nature had taught me ; I could not conceive what life would become if sight failed me.

Another twelve months passed, and sight *had* failed me ; the second eye followed the first, and day and night were all but alike to me. That year was my worst ; I hoped against hope, left not a chance for cure

untried, and finally, in company with one of my trusty band of friends, went to Düsseldorf to consult a famous oculist. He pronounced the disease to be *amaurosis*, that is, atrophy of the optic nerve. He could do nothing more for me than had been done in England; and home I came.

I had to face the fact at last that I should be blind for life—that that life had been cut in two, as it were; all its old ways and habits must be abandoned, and there seemed nothing but a dark blank beyond. But though this long-dreaded certainty demanded all the little fortitude and determination I might possess to face it calmly, it was not so bad as the time just preceding. The alternate hope and fear and wearing suspense, the ceaseless testing of what little remaining sight I had, were after all the greater trials; the going blind, rather than the being blind, it was which told the most upon me.

Ah, my good, generous, warm-hearted sympathisers, how you helped me through those dark hours! Many years have rolled over our heads since then, and more than one good comrade has 'passed into a world of light;' but no shade has ever come between me and you who remain: your hand-grip is fast and warm as ever; the tone of your friendly voices keeps all its old cheery ring; and your kindly faces live in my memory as I last saw them, untouched by the hand of Time. Yes, to you, then, I owe the rebound which came after I had realised the truth, and I began to think, as you suggested, of having recourse to the pen as an occupation.



I married not long after my fate was sealed, and then at once I had eyes and hands, pen and patience, put at my disposal, with an affectionate devotion not to be surpassed.

Yet I had some misgivings. Was it likely that I, who had never thought of writing anything more ambitious than a long letter or so to a distant chum, could hope to launch into print a word that anybody would care to read? And at first I encountered so many difficulties that I almost gave up the idea in despair.

But I soon found that writing had a wondrous fascination about it, and that in this respect, as in many others, it was strangely akin to painting, and whether it brought grist to the mill or not, it was an occupation that took me out of myself more thoroughly than could have been imagined.

This was what was needed to complete the rebound which my naturally buoyant and elastic nature was ready to give me. My mind, thrown back upon itself by the dark veil that intervened, only required something to feed upon, and almost before I had served a seven years' apprenticeship to my altered condition I began to forget for the most part that I was blind at all. Now that I have gone through my second term of servitude, my deprivation, except for the occasional inconvenience it causes me and sometimes my friends, affects me in hardly any perceptible degree; and taking a broad view of life, I may say that by God's mercy the sum-total of my happiness is as great now as it ever was.

This may appear strange at the first blush, and no

one would have been more ready than myself to repudiate such an idea as preposterous had my fate been foretold to me whilst in the full flush of my former career. However, this by the way.

Writing became a necessity. The artist-spirit found its legitimate vent, I suppose, in the pen, and moreover it afforded some very acceptable addition to income; for it must not be forgotten, without any wish to intrude my private affairs upon the reader, that whatever a blind man's friends may do for him, and however hard he may work, he cannot compete with the seeing as a producing machine, whilst his necessities are immensely increased; and when I had to give up the brush I had also to give up a handsome income, which my powers with the pen never offered me any hope of again realising. I had never either in my artist-days been much more of a reader than a writer; I had no inner world of long-stored book-lore to which I could retreat. My chief education had been derived from a close observation of the outer world; my deepest and best-beloved associations were those that lurked by mountain and valley, wood and lane, down and sea.

Nor had the life of men and cities been without a strong attraction for me. A cockney by birth, I loved my London in its due season. The brisk intercourse with congenial minds, the movement, the bustle, ay, and even the noise, had their fascinations—fascinations which are still in some degree more potent than all others. On long winter nights I can still enjoy a party round a studio stove almost as keenly as ever. The picture on

the easel from a well-remembered hand has but to be sketched out upon my palm, or my forefinger guided deftly over the composition and arrangement upon the canvas itself, with a *vivâ-voce* description of subject, colour, light, shade, and detail, and lo, with what I knew before, I have an image in my mind's eye vivid enough to give me infinite pleasure, whilst the talk about it and all matters naturally relating to the world of art I can listen to and take part in with no less amount of satisfaction than of yore.

Applying the same principle to many pictures that I do to one, I by no means abstain from visiting exhibitions because I cannot see. I delight in prowling round them in company with an able cicerone, and in hearing what has to be said of the painters who have performed, and of those who are promising. Many of the latter have come up and passed into the category of the former even since my time, as I have it; and though it is more difficult for me perhaps to imagine what their work is like than in the case of older hands whose productions I remember, I get a sense of pleasurable novelty, approximating pretty closely to that experienced by people in general who care about such things. Nay, I have even gone so far as to write notices of pictures, and I flatter myself I have sometimes managed to see and understand as much of what I have been writing about as some critics and observers do who have their eyes.

What holds good for pictures holds good for much besides. The life of the town, as it goes on in all its

infinite variety, is borne in upon me, and enjoyed by me, whilst I am in its midst, to an extent hardly credible, perhaps, to those who have never thought about such possibilities. My faculty for locality was always strong—it is even stronger now, principally, of course, because I have to depend on it more—and I astonish my guide often by the correctness with which I judge distance, know exactly where I am, direct our route, and otherwise show, as the phrase goes, that I know my way about; for I should not omit to say that my blindness is not so complete as to shut light entirely out. Very strong contrasts of black and white I am still conscious of, though their shape and outline are blurred and gone; and I could not, but for the knowledge of my whereabouts, distinguish whether an object rising against the light in the sky before me through my fog were a block of houses or a mass of trees. A dense impenetrable fog, light by day and dark by night; the intensest thickest sea or London fog alternately; a fog in which I am being gradually wrapped closer and closer, and which literally does not allow me to see my hand before me,—is the best simile I can find for the atmosphere in which I live; and it must be understood that objects, even when close to me, only appear as vague phantom-like shadows, without ‘form or presence.’ Undoubtedly this condition has its advantages over total obscurity, notwithstanding that it equally incapacitates me; it is a help unquestionably to be able just to tell, as I say, light from dark, especially in getting a knowledge of one’s immediate surroundings;

and though I dare not move a yard in London without a friendly arm, it does enable me to keep up my sense of locality the more easily.

And so I traverse the streets, and watch—I use the word advisedly—the mighty transformation daily taking place in buildings, thoroughfares, and the like, and which is rendering our city by degrees the handsomest in the world.

I have got quite to understand, for instance, what the Thames Embankment in the region of Westminster has done for it; I listen to its roar, and have learned to distinguish with a strange accuracy the component parts of the stupendous hubbub, the outcome whereof has been such papers as ‘London Landscape’ and the ‘Roar of London.’ Thus, when I came to think, there was no lack of subject-matter at hand to write about, even for one who had never contemplated being called upon to turn to the pen for occupation. I found it was all just as paintable in black and white as in colour; whilst the lights and shades, the tragedies and comedies, impossible to be overlooked by the dweller in a big city, afforded themes on which to draw for all the imaginings necessary for the story-teller.


A great playgoer at one time, that habit has almost forsaken me now. The theatre, unless when there is something very well worth listening to, attracts me but little. I infinitely prefer in nine cases out of ten going to my club, and hearing over a pipe and a cup of coffee the gossip and the criticism upon what is going on ‘at the play,’ to going there myself.

Although fond of music in the way that the expression is used by people who have had no musical education, I am afraid the opera and the concert-room do not open up such resources for me as would generally be imagined. I get oppressed and made fidgety by the confinement, glare, heated atmosphere, and the inevitable paraphernalia, so to speak, incidental to such society doings. A good orchestra and orchestral performances generally afford me immense pleasure, if—and this is a very important ‘if’—I can hear them in my own way—that is, free from any approach to a crowd seated in gorgeous array, with the ceremony usually inseparable from all evening assemblies. Were it luckily the habit of our military authorities to permit the ears of the groundlings to be gratified by the strains of regimental bands in the fashion common on the Continent, I fancy I should be a very constant *habitué* of the *place d’armes* or barrack-square at ‘play’ time. As it is, I seldom spend pleasanter musical evenings than those I pass beneath the hospitable roof of the ‘Wandering’ or ‘Moray’ Minstrels, saving always those by my own fireside, when the fingers of my home companion bring out from our pianoforte, with what seems to me a tender and delicate touch beyond compare, some of Beethoven’s exquisitely pathetic and dream-like movements. These charm me; for though I do not set my face by any means against good waltzes and sprightly melodies, the bang, crash, and rattle of musical fireworks are my abomination.

And if somewhat in this wise my London home

and the stir of the town, with its infinite change, social advantages, and phantasmagoria of interest and amusement, give me the wherewithal to lead my life pleasantly in the winter months, and an amplitude of themes, local, social, or domestic, upon which to write, it will not be difficult to understand how, with all my old predilections and associations, I hail the summer-time, and gladly turn from the heat and turmoil of the streets to the quiet and freshness of the country. More than ever then this pen-and-ink resource of mine comes into play ; here I am upon my own old ground, as it were, and the landscape-painter, with modifications, lives again.

As pictures on the easel or on walls are not found to be beyond my comprehension, it is hardly likely, considering my antecedents, that those displayed beneath the broad arch of heaven are less to be understood or enjoyed. No, truly ; although, as I sometimes say, I can do little more with the country than smell it, feel it, and listen to it, I am pretty sensitive, I warrant you, as to the change of locality, aspect, and the rest. The winds and the weather I had always been fond of watching, and I attend to them none the less now ; it used to be part of my business, and is so still, as it certainly is part of my pleasure. Once settled down in some favourite spot, I, with my guide, begin to explore, and I demand inexorably to be informed of everything about me ; so that I may master the lie of the land, learn the points of the compass and my way about, in what direction I may turn to face the sunset or the moon-rise, and generally to bring my bump of locality



into use. Every leading feature of the landscape must be traced out with my stick's point upon the ground, or, after the fashion of the picture on the easel, with a finger's tip upon my palm. In this case as in that, with what I knew before and hear of now, I build up tolerably veracious backgrounds for my figures, incidents, or what not. Ridge and hollow, nestling village or old church-tower, waving cornfields or woodland slope, sparkling river or sombre mere; meadows, trees, ruins, windmills, and spires; rocks, crags, beetling cliffs, and breaking seas, with all the incidents of coast or agricultural life,—these, with hints of sun and shade, cloud and sky, colour and effect, have but to be detailed to me, and wherever my summer wanderings lead me I get a tolerable notion of the sort of country I am in.

No one need question my thorough enjoyment of rural surroundings. The freedom and space of the open, to begin with, and the pleasure of leaving at times the arm of my guide, and swinging along at my own pace down a shady lane, or by-road, or along a flat sandy shore, without being every moment on the lookout with my long forefinger, as I call the point of my stick, for pitfalls in the shape of curbstones, doorsteps, lamp-posts, and the like, or having to be perpetually on guard against getting run over by wild hansoms and recalcitrant vans, or of coming constantly into collision with my fellow-mortals, bring with them a delicious sensation of novelty, which to me is renewed each year. Nevertheless I am no great pedestrian, holding to some

extent Sydney Smith's view that few sensible people are fond of much exercise ; so that there is little that I want whilst I can sit beneath bowering trees and shrubs, listening to the 'long breeze' streaming through them and across the neighbouring cornfields, with the lark and the rest of the song-bird choir singing high above my head and all around, or whilst I can lie prone upon a grassy slope near the cliff-edge, with 'the murmuring surge' below breaking in musical ripples upon the beach. Then, as the wind freshens, I can hear its pulses beat upon the rocks, whilst the ozone-laden air with its delicious odours blows the salt spray across my face. Indeed, what lover of the country will not tell me that he often voluntarily shuts his eyes the better to take in all the charms of its varied, innumerable, and mysterious minglings of silence, sound, and smell ?

The songs of birds, the lowing of kine, the splash of waters, the music of the winds, the gentle rustling of the corn, the distant church-bells, the long sweeping 'whish' of the scythe and flap of the flail (but these last two sounds, alas, will soon be but a memory to any of us, so seldom are they heard),—all can be taken in without the aid of eyes, and all surely go far to make up the charm of rural life.

And then the smells ! how delicious and perplexing they are ! The fragrance of the heather on the mountain-side, the fresh smell of the seaweed as one trudges along the beach when the tide is low, and—if one happens to be in a down-and-sea country at harvest-time—that unequalled odour of the ocean breeze, as it comes

to you impregnated with the scent of the ripe corn, clover, and wild-thyme-besprinkled turf. Or again, perhaps, what better delight for me than to dream away an hour or two of sunshine in a dear old-fashioned garden : a garden that I love, where things are left a little to take their chance and natural way of growing, which is not too primly kept or swept, as if arranged for a flower-show or horticultural fête ; a garden where there are in their due season wall-flowers, lilacs, stocks, moss-roses, carnations, lavender-bushes, and other sweet-smelling materials, whereof to make posies and nose-gays rather than bouquets, and where I know there are sunflowers, hollyhocks, and peonies, to give a sense of colour and bold form to my mental picture ?

Suppose once more that I choose to wander farther afield, to some rock-girdled bay, or inland to the woods, and amidst their silence arrange to camp for the day ; for when I am in the country I never spend an hour more than I can help within four walls, unless they be those of the garden.

Then it is more than ever that the old painting times seem to have returned to me. For my easel and canvas I have my thoughts and my patient scribe close by with paper and pencil ready to take them down. I do all I can to keep up the illusion : I go forth, laden with camp-stool, haversack, luncheon, friendly pipe, and white umbrella, in case we pitch our resting-place, as is often my fancy, in the broad sunlight rather than the shade ; for I am of the salamander temperament, and love to bask on sunny banks. Then, upon my word,

there is very little difference between the old days and the new. The figure I cut is not very unlike that of the labouring landscape-painter marching off to his subjects in the open. Indeed, my properties are the genuine articles used by the eminent artist in question for many a year, and bearing honourable scars of the wear and tear they have been put to. Then the work itself, with these surroundings, bears more than ever the wonderful similitude to sketching to which I have referred. The act of composition only differs in the difference existing between word-painting and colour-painting; and though I do not always profess to be dealing with the landscape in the midst of which I am, one cannot fail to be influenced mightily by it, and the backgrounds of such fictions as those of the 'Message of the Hour,' 'The Bell-Buoy,' 'Deed for Deed,' and the like, have been more or less suggested by the locality in which I found myself, whilst such little papers as 'The Easel in the Air,' 'At Bettws-y-Coed,' &c., may be said without exaggeration to have been painted on the spot. All that is mental in the process finds expression just as well with pen as with brush. Accidental touches carry the mind away into veins of treatment and ideas never dreamed of when the sketch was started, leading sometimes to infinitely better results than that with which the original was commenced, or, as likely as not, ending with failure, to be wiped out, and the whole begun over again. There comes on also at these moments that same racking, miserable, hair-tearing sort of despair which overtakes the painter when his brain

travels quicker than his hand, when 'things won't go,' and when in its treatment he fails to realise the fullness of his thought. There is also, of course, by the same token, the very reverse of this mental condition, when some lucky touch opens the way, and leads to the felicitous turning of a sentence temporarily satisfying the artist's ambition, and giving him that renewed impetus and enthusiasm in his work without which it drags heavily on, with dull and joyless steps.

To a certain extent, too, there are a few mechanical or objective tricks into which one naturally falls, which are not dissimilar from those incidental to the artist at his easel. Sitting placidly for a while in front of it, he grows excited or cramped and tired, and then he forthwith rises, stretches, lights a pipe, and stands to his work as a change. And so it is with my present occupation on such occasions. Very patiently I sit and smoke whilst dictating, and lounge and idle perhaps a bit; but, warming to my work, it becomes imperative that I move about: whereupon I proceed to rampage up and down a little given beat, like any caged animal (as indeed, looking at my condition from the graver side, I am), and thus stir up ideas, shaking the cobwebs from my brain, and giving that impetus to one's words which comes alone out of motion.

Thus, pleasantly enough, the time wears through; and then, when the sun begins to slope, and the landscape seems to change, and a whiff of wood-smoke from the village lets me see in my mind's eye its blue-gray wreaths curling gently through the tops of the tall elms,

comes the pleasantest hour almost of the whole day. The favourite book is opened, and I am read to as long as the light lasts.

Who is there that does not enjoy a book in the country? The greatest lover of fireside literature will admit that in pleasant weather, and in the quiet of some delightful rural scene, a book loses none of its value; and as, of course, to me the being read to is the one main source of all my mental enjoyment wherever I may be, I get rather more out of a book than other people, when in 'the silence of the woods' I listen to its contents.

I am accused of spending too much time over the newspaper by some of my friends; but as I am gregarious by nature, and fond of the life of men and cities, it is surely fit that I keep myself up to the mark as to what is going on in the world: it would never do to let events drift by me because I cannot actually observe them and be an actor in their midst; and how otherwise can I avoid such a result save through making myself well acquainted with the columns of the daily press? True, I have to spend more time over them than others need, because it is so difficult for the one reading aloud 'to skim' judiciously. A man without his eyes inevitably wastes many odd moments. For instance, he cannot utilise his late and early waking hours, whilst other sleepless fidgety folk can turn them to good account by aid of the favourite book lying by the bedside; nor can he dip into the news for any spare five minutes, in the way that others do; hence reading

the newspaper equally with the most important books becomes more or less a regular business, requiring a certain period to be set apart for it. Indeed, one of the great drawbacks of his condition is, that for the carrying out of many of the trifling acts of daily life he has, as it were, to set in motion a whole phalanx of machinery : he cannot even eat his dinner (at least I cannot) without turning his plate into a clock-dial, and requesting his nearest neighbour to cut up his meat, and put it at six o'clock, potatoes at twelve, adjuncts at three and nine, &c. ; and for his reading especially must he insure the immediate presence and coöperation of his helpmate.

'But can't you read for yourself the embossed books for the blind?' I hear some one say ; and I reply,

Certainly, to a slight extent ; but at present the range of that literature is very limited, and though I go, in a measure, with old Samuel Rogers in his saying that 'Whenever a new book comes out I read an old one,' I am weak enough to like the news and some of the books of the day before yesterday.

When philanthropy and ingenuity shall have completed the efforts now being made to diffuse widely and extend the range of embossed literature, the thirty thousand blind who, on an average, are found in the United Kingdom will, in another generation, doubtless have many an advantage at present denied to us.

And here I must say a few words about these same efforts. My infirmity naturally has brought me into contact with many a brother sufferer, notably with one of high attainments, who, having like myself, and from

the same cause (amaurosis), been compelled in the prime of life to relinquish his profession, is now devoting his time, his best energies, and his ample means to the improvement of the systems for the higher education of the blind, and their general welfare. He has established an association for this purpose, the leading feature of which is, that its council is composed of seven or eight gentlemen, all blind; it being held that the blind are the only reliable leaders of the blind. Most of the numerous systems of embossed literature now in use have been devised by the 'seeing,' consequently they are all imperfect, conflicting, and puzzling when fingers have to take the place of eyes.

'The British and Foreign Blind Association, for promoting the education and employment of the blind,' is already doing excellent work towards setting things a little in order; and after mature practical investigation its executive has, while thoroughly rectifying and improving it, adopted 'Braille's Dotted System' as the best, considering that it affords advantages unattained by all the others, and particularly because it is one which enables a blind person to write it as well as to read it, and to read what he has himself written, a thing that until quite lately has been believed all but impossible, at least in England. Moreover, it is the only system which adapts itself perfectly to musical notation, an advantage, all must allow, of the greatest importance when legislating for the higher education of the blind. The Association is printing and issuing at a very low price (a most essential point) an enormous

number of standard works in history, poetry, and fiction. It is producing elevated maps of the most admirable kind. It is furthering the system of teaching music, arithmetic, and in every way pushing the results of its careful attention and study into all the institutions for the blind throughout the kingdom. Of course it meets with considerable opposition; vested interests and ignorant fanaticism endeavour to retard its progress. This is to be expected, but in the long-run the best and fittest must survive. Meanwhile, funds are needed to carry on all this printing and embossing, and to establish the institution permanently; as although, whilst the noble-hearted leader of the movement lives, much of his ample means, as I have said, will be devoted to it, were he to die suddenly there would be great risk of the good work coming at once to a standstill, if not to an end.

I am afraid I am rather a lukewarm member of this council, though its objects have my heartiest sympathy. Were I thirty years younger, I might begin in earnest to learn to read and write and study music upon a new system, because I am perfectly convinced that a youngster of either sex, properly taught on the 'Braille' system, could learn to do all three pretty nearly as completely and as rapidly with the fingers alone as with eyes added; and when this condition of things really comes to pass, as I believe it will, the blind will be in a very different position with regard to the rest of mankind from that which they at present occupy; their independence will be fifty-fold greater, to say nothing

of their being qualified to earn their own living in nine cases out of ten.

Although I have certain responsibilities which demand my first consideration, yet, having been accredited with some business-like faculties, I enjoy discussing the general policy of this special institution as well as others directly associated with my own craft of former days with which I am connected. My sturdy friends refuse to release me from their company, and kindly insist that I shall not withdraw myself any more from their councils than I do from their exhibitions or studios. Thus many outlets are kept open for my gregarious instincts, and when after a run in the country I come back to town, I am as busy and—shall I say it?—as happy as the day is long.

Yet it would be far from the truth, notwithstanding this and all that I have set down about my happiness, were I to say I would not have the conditions of my present life altered, and I do not believe what was once said by a very distinguished blind man upon a public platform, that he 'did not *want* to have his sight again,' or words to that effect. Such a statement is sheer nonsense. Can any one imagine that I would not, if I could, again behold the beauties of sky, sea, and land; sunlight, form, and colour? Again take up my old pursuits, and again look upon the faces of my friends?

Alas, indeed, yes! Even though in the latter case many of my illusions might be destroyed, and my 'dream of fair women' especially be cruelly dispelled; for fair and beautiful as I left them fourteen years ago,

so are they fair and beautiful to me still, and I no sooner hear them speak than they stand before me as I saw them last; the mischief that time may have wrought upon their bright faces *I* can never guess at—they will never grow old to me!

No; I do but make the best of it, and hold myself in duty bound gratefully to recognise, by using them to the utmost, the untold means of compensation placed within my reach; but

‘ It is not now as it hath been of yore :
 Turn wheresoe’er I may,
 By night or day,
The things which I have seen I now can see no more.
 The rainbow comes and goes,
 And lovely is the rose ;
 The moon doth with delight
Look round her when the heavens are bare ;
 Waters on a starry night
 Are beautiful and fair ;
 The sunshine is a glorious birth :
 But yet I know, where’er I go,
That there hath passed away a glory from the earth.’

Yet so long as I have my books, and by means of my faithful reader can hold companionship with the great and thoughtful minds of past and present times, and can take in by the ear all that most nearly touches the heart of man, I have no room for anything but thankfulness and gratitude that it is my sight and not my hearing of which I am deprived.

I hope I shall not be accused of egotism, or have led any one to suppose that I imagine myself to be the only blind man in the world who has managed to face

his affliction cheerily. They nearly all do this. I have but tried to show that what pleased and interested me in my 'seeing' days interests me now. I could not give up all my old associations, which, as I have said, have been ever more or less artistic; and though I cannot judge of pictorial progress through the light and knowledge of the eye, I am not too proud to accept the compensation afforded me by listening to what goes on in the minds of labourers in the field of art and beauty.

More than all has my affliction revealed to me what a wealth of sterling warm-hearted kindness there is in human nature, and how even in this world good predominates over evil; how the bright presence of hope and love makes amends for the absence of the loveliness of the outer world:

'What though the radiance which was once so bright
Be now for ever taken from my sight—
Though nothing can bring back the hour
Of splendour in the grass, of glory in the flower?
We will grieve not; rather find
Strength in what remains behind:
In the primal sympathy
Which, having been, must ever be;
In the soothing thoughts that spring
Out of human suffering;
In the faith that looks through death;
In years that bring the philosophic mind.'

Thus much I have felt bound to say, in order to show how it was that I ever thought of writing at all. I cannot hope, however, even though I may entreat their mercy, that strangers and critics will regard the follow-

ing 'Half-hour Sketches' with the same indulgence as you, my friends, around the fire, who so warmly welcome me amongst you, and who, for many a long year now, have, by your ready sympathy and cheery *camaraderie*, bestowed upon me some of the very happiest hours I have ever known.

And as the child, holding the shell to its ear, hears the echoed semblance of the ripple, the splash, and the long-drawn roar of the ocean, so these pages, some the result of pure imagination, but many the reflex of actual experience, are offered to the reader in the hope that they may, in an idle half-hour, serve to remind him faintly, but audibly, of the chance and change, the romance and reality, the tears and the smiles, ever rapidly succeeding each other in the great sea of life.

W. W. FENN.

Great Marlborough-street, July 1878.

. It is to the courtesy and kindness of the proprietors of the following journals and magazines that I am indebted for permission to reprint the succeeding tales and articles, viz. *Illustrated London News*, *The Queen Newspaper*, *Good Words*, *All the Year Round*, *Tinsleys' Magazine*, *St. James's Magazine*, *Belgravia*, *The Broadway*, *Routledge's Annual*, *London Society*, *Argosy*, &c.

W. W. F.



THE ROMANCE OF A RESCUE.

ASSUMING the truth of the adage, that 'Fact is stranger than fiction,' the following facts have been strung together in a coherent narrative form, with the belief that they at least present a series of events and coincidences as strange as any fiction woven in story-teller's brain. To the circumstance of their having occurred at a period long before the present days of quickly-disseminated sensational news may be ascribed the oblivion into which they sank. The brief recapitulation of them, the removal of the action to comparatively our own time, and the suppression, for obvious reasons, of the names of people and places, need not, it is thought, lessen the interest in the facts themselves.

A bitterly cold night about eight o'clock in the middle of December 1852. A solitary inn hard by a small village on the South Downs, near the coast, with its hanging sign creaking dismally in the sleety wind. A dim light shining through a crevice of the window shutter, the only evidence that the inmates are still up; and a man, thickly muffled, carrying a small hand-bag, knocking with his fist at the door.

The weather, the place, and the hour justify his urgency; and when admitted his quiet note of satis-

faction brings a cheery smile to the lips of the burly good-natured landlord, as he says,

‘A proper bad night, too. I reckon winter’s upon us at last in earnest. What’ll you take, sir?’

‘Something hot, and something to eat; and I want a bed, if I can have one,’ is the answer, as the two enter the snug bar-parlour.

Another note of satisfaction from the traveller, now taking off his rough pea-jacket before the fire, and showing by his under-dress that the sea may be his calling.

A good-looking young man, somewhat under thirty, fair-haired and blue-eyed, but deeply bronzed and weather-beaten.

‘Yes; it’s pleasanter in here,’ he goes on, ‘than out in mid-channel to-night, or even than on the top of these downs. The sea is making a tidy roar upon the beach. It’s not far off, I suppose?’

‘Just below the cliff; three hundred yards or so, maybe, at the end of my garden. New to these parts, be ye?’ continues the host, mixing some hot grog.

‘Yes, I have just come off a long voyage, and came ashore in the pilot-boat this afternoon. It tried to make Newhaven; but the tide was too strong, and we were obliged to run for some little bit of a place (I forget the name), five miles to the eastward. I was anxious to get to my home by Christmas, and if I had gone round in the ship to the river I might not have been able to do so. So I let her take on my few traps, except this bag, and I thought to get a train for London

at Newhaven ; but as we couldn't land there, there was nothing for it but to walk back over these hills. But somehow I missed my way, and it seemed likely enough I should have to pass the night on them. Luckily I struck a road half an hour ago which led me on here, and now I must wait till the morning. Is this far from Newhaven ?'

'Ten mile a'most. You must ha' lost your way indeed. You've been walking away from it.'

'Well, never mind. You've got a snug little place here. I might have been worse off. I suppose I took the wrong turn ; but it soon got so pitchy dark that I could see nothing but your white roads, and they are all alike.'

He is here interrupted by the snarling bark of a dog, and as the animal itself runs in from the passage the traveller gives a slight start. Then, eyeing it curiously, he makes friendly overtures to the creature, who, however, without rejecting them, sulkily, and with a low continuous growl, creeps under the chair by the fireside, on which the host is now sitting, opposite his guest.

'Lie down, Spot ! No one wants to meddle with you. Terrible contrary dog, sure-ly, he bees ; but he won't do you no harm, sir. Can't get him to make friends wi' any one but me.'

'Had him long ?'

'Four year about ; and he comes to cling to me, don't ye see, 'cause it was me as brought him round—saved his life, like. I s'pose that's why he took to me ; but he won't take to no one else—no, not a man-

jack on 'em—not a man, woman, or child, 'cept me. He don't offer 'em no hurt, don't you see; but he's just contrairy with 'em all. Sometimes he vexes me, and I wish I'd knocked him on the head; scares folks at times, and that bean't good at an inn.'

The traveller has been looking at the dog furtively, and there is a quiver on his lip as he says, 'He's not very handsome. I never saw but one like him before. How did you come by him?'

'Cur'ously, rather. But I'll just see after your supper, and speak to my missus about your bed, and I'll tell you when I come back.'

The landlord is away but a minute or two, during which time the dog does not move, but sits glaring from beneath the chair at the traveller with eyes that in the shadow seem to glow as redly as the coals in the grate. An uncanny unprepossessing dog, resembling somewhat the breed known as 'coach-dog'—white, with black spots, but larger, and with longer legs, as if with a cross of pointer in him, short-haired and strong-limbed—a beast quite out of place by the hearth.

Refreshment served, and the guest having fallen to vigorously, the landlord resumed his seat and said, 'Well, I was a-goin' to tell ye how I came by old Spot here. It was four years the end of last September when, about six o'clock one morning, I went down to the bottom of my bit of a garden to dig a few 'tatoes. The weather was dull and cold, with a drizzling rain. I was just goin' to set to with the fork, when I heard a kind o' whine coming, as it seemed, from the bits o'

bushes by the paling at the top o' the cliff, and close agin the little path we goes down to the beach by. It quite scared me for a minute, for it was more like the cry of a child than anything else; but when I looked to see what it was, and peeped in, don't ye know, under the shrubs, I saw this here poor beast crouched up and all of a shiver (as well he might be). But he looked up that savage out of his eyes that I dursn't touch him. He half growled at me; but he seemed so weak he couldn't move, and his bones were a'most coming through his skin. I never clapped eyes on such a poor miserable creetur'. I'd half a mind then and there to put him out of his misery. Still, I didn't quite like for to do that, bein' fond o' dumb animals, and I began to wonder where he could ha' come from. There warn't no one about here that owned a dog like him—fact is, I han't never seen a dog like him. So I went back to the house and got a little hot milk-and-water, and soaked a bit of bread in it, and took it to him and pushed it just in under the bush. I dursn't touch him, for he still kept looking up, savage-like, at me; but after he'd had his muzzle in the warm stuff for a minute, and he seemed to understand I didn't mean him no harm, quite a change came over his eye, and when he'd drunk all the milk he tried to crawl out towards me; but he was that weak he couldn't drag hisself along more nor a foot, and he couldn't stand up at all; so I coaxed him a bit, and at last just patted his head; and though he still seemed to doubt, and was half inclined to snarl, I caught hold of him in my arms and brought him to

the fire, and put him down on this very hearth—didn't I, old Sulks?' the landlord continued, addressing the dog, who during the narrative had gradually been creeping from under the chair, as though he understood what was being said, and now, ungraciously enough, began to thrust his nose into the man's hand.

'Ah, you was a sight then, you ungrateful old beast! All wet and sore—a reg'lar bag of bones! Ay, it was months, sir, afore he could walk across the room without falling down!'

'And you never found an owner for him?' asked the guest, who throughout his meal and the story had been ceaselessly eyeing the dog with the same curious and furtive expression. 'It is strange! Where do you think he sprang from?'

'Well, I never could rightly tell; but I reckon he had had a swim for it, and just managed to get ashore and creep up the path to where I found him. He couldn't well ha' got no other way than from the beach, and he couldn't ha' got to that part of the beach where my path goes down 'cept from the sea. No; I reckon he'd tumbled or been chucked overboard from some ship; or, maybe, there'd been a wreck, but never no signs of it was to be seen.'

'And this is four years ago, last September?' said the guest musingly, as he drew his chair towards the fire, continuing to scan the dog eagerly. 'Come here, boy; let's have a look at you!'

The dog, with his nose in the air, advanced a step or two, sniffed suspiciously in the direction of the

stranger, and then, with a sullen growl, retreated again beneath his master's chair.

Lighting a pipe, and now standing up with his back to the fire and with an air of satisfied determination, the traveller turned to his host, and said impressively, 'It's a curious thing, but I don't mind saying to you that that dog gives me the oddest sensation I ever had in my life; and if I tell you a part of my history, perhaps you'll understand why. I feel strangely impelled to do so. I don't suppose any good can come of it, or that it can help me at all. I don't suppose there's anything in it but a coincidence—the whole thing would be too wildly improbable and impossible; but the brute is so like a dog that was closely associated with the turning-point in my life—the one great calamity which, I fear, I shall never get over, and which he reminds me of so horribly—that two or three times since I've been sitting here I seem to have been going through all the misery of it again and again.'

The landlord's intelligent and kindly face began to assume an expression of keen interest, and he said, 'I should like to hear it, sir—I should. Go on.'

'Listen here, then. Four years ago, the beginning of last September, I was a clerk in a large brewery in one of the chief seaport towns away down in the eastern counties. There wasn't a happier youngster living. I had been in the house from a boy, and had risen through several grades in the office, and was accounted thoroughly honest and trustworthy. Our collector just about that time being suddenly taken ill, the firm

settled that I should do his business in the emergency—his business being to collect considerable sums of money periodically from the various customers in the country. He had to travel many miles at times, and used to go in a gig. I had been with him more than once, so I knew exactly what to do and where to go. Well, I went the round and collected the money, and was returning with over two hundred pounds in my pocket—a large quantity of it in gold and silver in a canvas bag, and some cheques and notes in a pocket-book. It was a fine quiet evening at the beginning of the month, and the twilight had set in before I left the last village where I had to call. Soon after I drove out of it I saw a dog on ahead, and, as I came up with it, I also saw a man slinking along in the shadow of the hedge. He looked like a tramp, and appeared to take no notice of me as I passed, nor did I much of him, for the dog diverted my attention by yelping and snarling viciously at my horse. He jumped up at his nose, and barked, and bounded about, and ran alongside for many yards. At last I made one or two cuts at him with my whip; then he dropped behind the gig and trotted along as quietly as possible, just as you often see a coach-dog following a carriage, for he was more like a coach-dog than anything else, only larger—white with black spots; in fact, the very counterpart of the beast under your chair. I could see this plainly, although it was getting rather dark; the contrast of the black and white made it easy.

‘The road was a lonely road, and became more so

the nearer we got to the sea ; and I somehow began to dislike the company of this strange dog. Still, on he came persistently, in spite of all my efforts to shake him off. I drove as fast as the horse could go ; but he would keep up with us, now close under the gig, now at a little distance, but always with his nose up in the air, as if scenting something, and every now and then giving a snarling sort of yelp. At times when the trees and hedges were thick and overshadowing I half fancied the man was following at a run also ; but as, by degrees, they grew scantier, and I could really discern nothing of him, I believed it was only my own nervousness, on account of the money I had with me, and its being the first time of my having had such a responsibility. Even to this hour I cannot be sure how this may have been. All I know is that I felt very uncomfortable and wished myself safely back. Presently the road came out by the coast, upon an open common or down, and began to descend a short, but steep, hill, to where it ran along beside the sea. At the foot of this hill, and close under the low cliff which formed it, were the remains of an old quarry and kiln, whence ran out a little jetty for the lading of small craft. The whole affair had long been disused, so I was surprised to see a small cutter, with her mainsail flapping in the air, lying close in against the old piles, and some men either mooring her or pushing her off. It was now far too dark, however, to distinguish plainly what was going on, nor did I care : my anxiety was to get home. Consequently I made a short cut across the turf of the down. There was a

half-used way here, and I could go faster than on the road; so I struck on to it briskly, closely pursued as usual by this fiend-like dog, who was no sooner upon the turf than he dashed forward, and began to bark and jump up at the horse like a beast possessed. The horse was startled, and being tired suddenly stumbled, and I was pitched out of the gig head foremost. And now comes the strangest part of all my strange sensations. I have no recollection of being stunned or of losing my senses, for I seemed to fall softly upon the turf, and to have been aware immediately of the horse and gig stopping, and of the snorting breath of the dog upon my face. Yet in reality I must have lain there insensible for a long while; for when I eventually moved and stood up it was deep night, the moon was high in the heavens, not a sound was to be heard save the murmur of the summer sea upon the shore, and the horse champing his bit, as he quietly browsed on the turf close by.

‘Dazed and bewildered, I could not at first divine what had happened. I felt as if in a dream; but, quickly pulling myself together, I led the horse and gig back into the road, and instantly thought of my money. Gone, by Heaven! bag and pocket-book both, out of my breast-pocket!

‘I rushed to the spot where I had fallen; not a sign of it, though the moon showed every blade of grass. Back again to the gig, looking under apron, driving-box, in my pockets, everywhere. And the dog, the accursed dog which had caused my fall? Not a sign of him either!

I whistled, I called ; no response. And the men and the cutter ? I sprang into the gig, for I was quite unhurt, my hat only being a little damaged, and drove to the top of the hill—men, boat, all gone ; everything as silent as the grave !

‘I was going to look at the hour ; and then for the first time discovered that my watch was gone ! Frantic, despairing, mad, I drove wildly down the road, and along by the sea to the town, three miles in all. The brewery was on the outskirts. The gates were shut, and one light only was burning in the lodge. The porter was waiting up for me ; he was wondering why I was so late ; for the hour was half-past one.’

The traveller, who had grown much excited with his narration, here paused, drew a long breath, and sat down. Then, refilling his pipe, continued :

‘There’s no need to trouble you with much more about it. My story was not believed. They never directly said so ; but when the police had done all they could—when the spot had been searched, when all inquiries had been made, and when nobody could be found who had seen or heard of a cutter lying off the old quarry, or of a man with a black-and-white coach-dog—well, when, in a word, nothing turned up to corroborate my statement, and the firm found itself out of pocket by nearly two hundred pounds (of course they did not lose by the cheques, which had been stopped), I was politely informed that I had better resign my appointment. The affair, of course, got wind ; my character was blown upon ; whispers reached me to the effect

that I had appropriated the money, and had trumped up some preposterous story about a mysterious dog and the rest of it, which nobody in his senses could believe. And,' added the young man, after a pause, and with a heavy sigh, 'perhaps you won't believe it either, Mr. Landlord; but that dog of yours has brought it all back to me so strongly that I felt obliged to tell you.'

'No fear,' answered the host, who had followed every word of the narrative with the closest attention and interest; 'no fear about my believing of you; a man don't tell a tale like that for the fun of it. Terrible strange! Surely,' he added contemplatively, 'it couldn't be the same dog, do you think?'

'Heaven knows!' was the answer; 'but as I have told you so much, I'll just say, before I turn in, that I am going back to the old place now, to face it out; to spend my Christmas once more with my poor old mother; to pay back the money, and to ask the little woman who was going to be my wife if she'll still have me; for you must know I was engaged to be married when this ruin fell—had taken a small house and furnished it on the strength of my promotion in the office; and this very circumstance was brought against me, for it was hinted that I intended to cover my outlay with the money I said I had lost or been robbed of. The girl was right enough—she never doubted me; but we had nothing to live on, and, moreover, if we had, I was too proud to link her to my disgrace. I swore to wipe it out some day, and, as far as the money goes, I can do it now.'


He stopped abruptly, and then went on :

‘And if by any wondrous chance I should have fallen upon another aid to my doing so, and if, indeed, this be another slice of good luck ! Come here, Spot ; come out, let’s have a look at you. If you should be the same brute to whom I owe all my trouble—you are very like him, and time tallies—could you help me through it ? Bah ! the thing is ridiculous !’

The dog only answered the appeal by a sniff and a snarl ; but the landlord, rising, held out his hand with the air of a man who had made up his mind to something, and said,

‘It might be worth trying, and if so be ye’d like the animal to be took down with ye, to be shown as the sort of dog ye meant—even to take him along to the place where you was bowled over, and see what he’d make of it (he’s proper sagacious, mark ye ; he all but talks to me)—why, I wouldn’t mind taking of him down myself with ye, for he wouldn’t go without. I could leave my missus and son in charge here for a few days.’

‘You are very good,’ answered the young man ; ‘I don’t object, if ye’ll let me pay your expenses ; I shall be glad of your company, and it really might be worth trying. I must be paymaster, however, for I have a fair share of money now. I have had wondrous luck all my life, save that once ; and when in shame and disgrace I worked my way out to California before the mast, and when I reached the gold-fields, my old luck returned. I have scraped together by degrees enough for all I



ever shall want now; so you shall go down with me, and see me through it.'

The men shook hands; a chord of sympathy had been struck; the contact of their true natures had made them suddenly akin.

Three days later, and within two of Christmas, the plan has been carried out. The newly-made friends and the queer, mysterious, uncouth dog are away down in the eastern counties, at the large seaport town. They have lain *perdu* for the night, the young man determining not to disclose himself until the odd fancy of the landlord for taking the dog to the spot where the mysterious loss or robbery of the money happened has been indulged. He has insisted that, if they were correct in surmising the animal to be the same, he would somehow show a knowledge of the place, and by his action, perhaps, lead to some corroborative testimony of the young man's story, and help to the clearing of his character.

Thus, upon one of the dullest, grayest, and coldest mornings that ever, without frost and snow, preceded the great Christian anniversary, the men and the dog found their way to the locality. The returned exile proceeded to point out all the different bearings of it with regard to the catastrophe, and he was somewhat affected as he recounted and recalled the sensations with which he last gazed upon the scene. Then he had been accompanied by the not too bright, but highly important, chiefs of the local constabulary, trying to make them

understand the how and the where, feeling all the while that not a word of what he said was credited. The dog, too, showed some little uneasiness, but hardly enough to justify the supposition that he recognised the place. Still, he fidgeted and sniffed about, and did not keep so close to his master's heels as usual.

They walked inland to the neighbourhood of the village where the animal first attached himself to the horse and gig, and then back all along the road to the short cut across the turf where the accident happened.

'Well,' said the landlord slowly, and in his contemplative manner, as he watched the dog, who here displayed increased signs of disquiet, 'I shouldn't like for to say exac'ly as he knows nothin' at all about it. I reckon we han't had our journey quite for nothin'. No; I shouldn't like to say as he han't never been here afore, though it don't seem very likely when one comes to think on it; but we'll just go and give him a turn round about yonder old stone-quarry and pier, where you see'd the cutter lyin'. Come on, Spot!'

They descended the hill to the foot of the cliff, where there trickled from the rock a spring of fresh water, at which the dog stopped to drink. The whole district was as lonely and deserted as ever, and a heavy ground swell, which came thundering in upon the shore with a dull monotonous thud, lent to it additional dreariness. As the friends were standing just within the old enclosure of the kiln on the beach, and the dog, having slaked his thirst, was about to rejoin them, he suddenly pricked up his ears and began to sniff with his

nose high in the air, at the same time giving a little snarl or yelp.

'That's exactly the action and the noise,' cried the young man. 'Good heavens! I could swear to him now!' And before he could make any further remark the dog had trotted off away round to the other side of the kiln, where it impinged upon the cliff. Here he stopped, sniffed, snarled, and ran backwards and forwards two or three times, but now with his nose to the ground. Then he clambered up the crumbling face of the cliff a little way, and then tore back round into the quarry by the kiln, and then back again up the cliff, the men eagerly watching and following him the while. Soon he commenced scratching away with his fore paws between the wall and the cliff, where the one was built into the other. By degrees he made a biggish hole; then he stopped, and again got round to the other side of the wall, within the kiln, and again began scratching at a heap of rubbish, the *débris* of the fallen roof. There was less light here than outside; but soon another big hole was made, and as the men eagerly watched, encouraging the dog and helping him with their feet to remove the earth and decayed brickwork, there became visible the remnants of a garment of some kind; and a little later, by their combined efforts, they had laid bare the remains of a human body, dressed, as well as they could discern, in a seaman's guernsey and trousers.

Not a sight to dwell upon! The men were aghast; the dog, half wild with excitement, panting and foaming at the mouth, and for ever uttering his short yelp.

To hurry to the town for assistance was the friends' first impulse. They were about to yield to it when the action of the dog again arrested them. After whirling round and round the body, and throwing his head up into the air with the same sniffing action, he began to leap against the farther end of the wall, as if trying to spring up to a deep ledge it formed at the top, where the curving roof of the kiln had once beetled forward, and the remains of which still projected a foot or two.

'He wants to get up there, see!' cried the younger man. 'Just lend me a hand and give me a hoist.' And with this help he succeeded in getting the top of the wall within his reach; then thrusting his hand over the ledge, in another moment he had pulled out a heavy packet of something wrapped up in a piece of tarpaulin. The two men hastened with it to the light, and, tearing open the dusty mildewed wrapper, which consisted of a sailor's waterproof legging, and was only folded over and over, came upon—what? The identical lost property! A heavy canvas bag, a watch and chain, and a large pocket-book.

Cleared, then, at last! Character, position, all restored; the loss made good by the restitution of the actual money to a penny untouched. Imagine what followed, and whether the Christmas-day of 1852 was not a merry and a memorable one indeed to that group of good folk away down in the eastern counties! Imagine the delight and gratitude of the aged mother, who had never thought to look upon her outcast son again;

the joy of the affectionate girl, who had bravely gone on hoping and believing that justice would be done to her lover in the end, and the proud triumph he felt in the public recognition of his innocence; the gratification of the landlord at the issue of his share in the general happiness, and the quiet satisfaction he felt at having yielded to the dictates of humanity in saving the dog's life! All this it may be easy enough to imagine; but what imagination can account for the strange combination of circumstances which brought this rejoicing about, and by which the cloud that rested upon the clerk's good name was swept away?

Why did the dog, in the first instance, attach himself to the horse and gig, for clearly the dog was the same? Equally clearly murder had been done; but who by, and who the victim was—whether the owner of the dog, or the thief, or both, or whether the hands from the cutter had a share in the affair—no man could say. How the money came to be hidden, and how the dog found his way to the innkeeper's garden on the South downs, more than two hundred miles off, it is again impossible to say. All was the merest speculation; but an astute detective, who was sent down from Scotland-yard on the discovery of the body, to investigate the whole case, built up a theory. It was more or less adopted as the true one by the good folk at the seaport town. It is the most probable solution of the mystery; and, as such, is here given. A local newspaper, in its final account of the adjourned inquest, had *the following* :

‘At the close of the coroner’s inquiry, Mr. Diver, of Scotland-yard, was good enough, in a conversation he held with our reporter, to express some of his conjectures on the subject, but which, of course, could not be received as evidence at the inquest; and it may not be uninteresting to our readers to learn how the highest intelligence, backed by a vast experience, can account for what, to ordinary minds, appears unaccountable.

“You see,” said he, “in the first place there’s nothing to show to whom the dog belonged. Now my opinion is that he belonged to nobody; he was a tramp, an out-and-out tramp; for there are tramp dogs as well as tramp humans; they are constantly about in the country. It was only a chance companion he had in the tramp human with whom he was when the young gentleman first saw him; and this being the case, and there being no tie between dog and man, the beast immediately takes up with the horse and gig, which it was quite natural for him to do, seeing what a lot of the coach-dog there is in him. Again, it was quite natural for him to begin to bark and jump up at the horse’s nose directly the young gentleman turned on to the turf; coach-dogs always do something of that kind at starting or taking a fresh road. The change from the road to the turf had the same effect on him which it often has on a horse, and made him inclined to kick up his heels; so he runs forward and barks as the young gentleman describes, and the accident happens—happens, mind you—several miles beyond where the slinking human tramp is left behind: he never followed

on, it was only the young gentleman's nervousness made him think that; so I dismiss him, as having nothing whatever to do with the affair. No; it lay amongst those chaps with the cutter, and with them alone. It's pretty certain the murdered man was a foreign seaman; several things showed that—such as the rings remaining in the dried-up cartilage of the ears, the two half-francs, the sou-piece, and the 'baccy-box found in his trousers-pocket: they were Dutch fishermen, no doubt, come ashore to fill their water-keg at the spring; there are lots of them going backwards and forwards on this coast.

“Well, they see, or one of them sees, the accident first, and comes running up to where the young gentleman is lying insensible; for he was stunned, no doubt of that, although he didn't know it. This chap catches sight of the bag, pocket-book, and watch, and collars them unseen—unseen, as he thinks, by any of his mates; but some of them, coming up just then, suspect him, perhaps accuse him, of priggish something; he denies it, and somehow makes his way down to the kiln, and hides his swag unobserved. Then a row follows; the fellows insist on his sharing it; he swears he has got nothing; they try to search him, he resists; then there's a fight—perhaps knives are used; anyhow, he gets an unlucky blow which kills him. Then, in their consternation, they bury the body hastily under the heap of rubble. No one will ever find it there, the place is too deserted; and they make off.

“The dog all this while has been hovering about,

and when he sees the men getting into their boat he, vagabond-tramp like, jumps in with them off the pier, as he easily could. They are too much flurried by what has happened, and are in too great a hurry to get away, to take notice of him at first. For the same reason they have not given a second thought to the young gentleman and the gig. How the fellow got time to hide the money unseen before the row occurred is, of course, the most difficult question of all; but that the man who was murdered hid it is shown conclusively by the fact that whereas on one leg of the body there were the remains of a tarpaulin overall, on the other there were none, the second having obviously been used to wrap the booty in. Perhaps the disappearance of one of his leggings may have led his mates first to suspect him; but this is of little consequence.

“Thus much dismissed, the rest is clearer. Once fairly at sea and their minds a little easier, the fellows find they have brought the dog with them. They don’t exactly know what to do with him; they don’t like to drown him, for they are superstitious beggars these foreign sailors, and they think that might bring ill-luck; and they don’t like to put him ashore on this coast, because, in the first place, they don’t care to go near it, and, in the second, he might tell tales by finding the body or what not. So they decide to keep him, which they do for a while; but then they soon find out what an ill-natured ‘contrairy’ beast it is. He won’t take to any of them—perhaps bites one of them; and

they, having run round for some purpose into the Channel and south coast (wanting to give the east a wide berth), get rid of him, or he gets rid of them by jumping overboard when he sees the land near; or they may have been wrecked—there's no knowing. Anyhow, he has a bad time of it, and at last is only just able to drag himself up the cliff to the inn-garden. Then, knowing what reasoning beasts dogs are, what more natural than that it should have taught him a lesson, and that he should have given up his tramping life, seeing how well that good honest landlord treated him? His ways were ungrateful enough; but, after all, he well repaid the man's kindness by so knowingly helping to clear the young gentleman's character.

“I don't suppose that he really remembered the place; but being a sort of poacher or scavenger by trade, and having a sharp nose, by reason of the pointer blood that is in him, he scented something down in the old kiln and rummaged it out, smelling the tarpaulin legging after a while as plainly as he had the rest. I think whatever evidence there is supports my conclusions. Anyway, the ‘Romance of the Rescue’ is pretty plain, and only shows that you can never go wrong in behaving to dumb animals (as we are pleased to call them) just as kindly as we should to one another.

“It's as strange an affair as ever came under my notice,” added Mr. Diver, in conclusion; “and though poetry is not much in my line, I happen to remember some lines from ‘The Ancient Mariner,’ I think it is called, which say, ‘He prayeth best who loveth best all

things, both great and small ;' and it seems to me that on that Christmas morning, after the affair had been cleared up and the young gentleman set right, there couldn't have been any one whose prayers went straighter to Heaven than those from the lips of that kind-hearted landlord."'

THE EASEL IN THE AIR.

‘UNDER the greenwood tree,’ ay, or wherever we meet with grateful shade and picturesque scenery, we are sure to come ever and anon, during our rambles in this pleasant autumn weather, on one of the genial fraternity of landscape-painters.

Yes, there he sits, hard at work, rough-coated, wide-awaked, long-bearded, and short-piped, quiet and happy. Who does not know the picture? and who knowing it, and caring one jot for the beauties of Nature, does not envy that tranquil labourer at his ‘easel in the air’?

Free from the busy hum of men, he and his brethren, at all times diligent, are perhaps more in their glory and in greater force in the present month than during any other in the whole year. Now the golden tints of autumn begin to mingle with the purer greens, giving that variety and warmth of colour to the whole scene about which our patient painter never tires of prating.

Now is the time when mountain, lake, and waterfall, when copse and cliff, cornfield and rocky shore, glade and common, forest and moorland, picturesque towns, cathedral cities and abbey ruins, are ransacked, and made to render up their beauties for the edification of the picture-loving world of next season. Not a district

remarkable in any way for its charm of scenery but teems more or less with the brethren of the brush. Not a wooded knoll or sheltered grove, rapid torrent or broad flowing river, not a beetling cliff or sequestered fishing village of any reputation amongst the fraternity, but has its one or more patient devotees quietly striving with the utmost care to perpetuate its subtle beauties, or boldly carrying off with broad dashing *tours de force* the larger and more striking characteristics of the spot.


Here crop up, like mushrooms, the white umbrella, the comfortable tent, or the snug hut, in every expected or unexpected nook and corner. A happy, jovial, genial, kindly crew, these painters, now distributed over the length and breadth of all paintable lands. Patient, modest, good-tempered, they seldom fail to win their way to the hearts of the sometimes puzzled and wondering natives amongst whom they pitch their tents, and set up their 'easels in the air.'

Time was, and not so very long ago, when the landscape-artist contented himself with making only a few scraps and studies from Nature, to be hereafter worked and tortured into compositions in his studio. The advance of, and love for, truth has, however, greatly changed all this; and although we still have hosts of the rapid skilful sketchers (may their shadows, or we may say their lights and shadows, never grow less!) who, as the phrase goes, 'wipe up' a district, by capturing rapidly all its salient paintable points, and who are here to-day and gone to-morrow,—the touring artist in fact,—there are now hundreds of landscapes, of the

most ambitious pretensions, painted almost entirely on the spot; on the spot to which, day after day, week after week, and sometimes month after month, you may see the diligent, persevering, Nature-loving limner trudging from his quarters in the village or the farmhouse with the regularity of clock-work.

Wind and rough weather are naught to him, for he is a conscientious man—over-much so, it may be, on this point—and will not have it said that he worked at his picture without Nature before him, however different her aspect or the hour of the day may be from that effect and moment which he is endeavouring to perpetuate on his canvas. Yes, on this question his arguments and doings are not unfrequently full of absurdities; but his labours, if he has his wits about him, generally result in a success which he never would have achieved anywhere but at his ‘easel in the air.’

Hard work this, my dear Miss Enthusia Blandish; you who are so enraptured with the idea of learning to sketch in six lessons; who are so delighted with that charming drawing which the dexterous Mr. Bolingbroke Jones, the eminent and fashionable instructor in art, produced for your edification in his lesson to you at the dining-room table this morning, when you were supposed to glean a complete insight into the subtle mysteries of Nature, and to acquire the knowledge of a lifetime by watching for one hour the skilful fingers of that accomplished drawing-master. Yes, I repeat, my dear young lady, very hard work it is, that painting in the *open air*, and a very different thing going to it with the



regularity of a bricklayer's labourer from being driven out after luncheon to a pretty point in the park, there to dally as long as you feel inclined with those tempting-looking materials supplied by Messrs. Winsor & Newton. Nevertheless, before or after luncheon, be our powers great or small, in spite of all petty annoyances and disappointments, it is a charming occupation, either as business or pleasure, this sketching from Nature ; for whether it is the resource of an idle hour or two, or fills up the great object of our lives, whether we spend half a day or half a year over our subject, there is nothing like it.

O, they were glorious days, those sketching days of yore ! Altogether there never has been, and never will be, any time to compare with them. Youth and enthusiasm well on our side, how eagerly would we lay our plans for the summer campaign, when lengthening days and the first glimpses of genial spring stimulated our latent desire to be off to the fields or the shore ! What excitement it was getting our things together, that mysterious paraphernalia, necessary and unnecessary (always plenty of the latter), with which the painter delights to encumber himself ! Curious devices, dodges, and contrivances in the shape of oilskin cases, straps, buckles, loops, buttons, rings and hooks, long sticks, short sticks, folding seats and easels, umbrellas, cords, pegs, and sometimes tents—nay even, if very ambitious, a marvellous portable wooden hut itself ! What a lot we were going to do ! how hard we would work ! and what a bill we ran up in Rathbone-place, for a stock of

brushes, colours, canvas, and paper ! half of which we would sometimes bring back unused ; for be it known, by the way, when things do not go smoothly (as is very frequently the case 'in the open'), and the results of our labours are not quite so abundant as we expected, we excuse our shortcomings to ourselves by vowing how industrious we will be when once more back in the comfort of the studio, precisely as, when there in the winter, we declared, if rather lazy, that we could not paint without Nature before us ; only wait till we get into the country, &c. &c.

He is a cunning rascal, your artist, when not inclined to work, and never fails to find plausible reasons for procrastination. Still, it would never do to run the chance of being hard up for materials ; so we take plenty, and set our ingenuity to task to invent wonderful contrivances by which to carry a large bulk in a small compass ; and then at last, 'furnished for our flight,' we are fairly off.

What high spirits we were in, on those hot summer mornings, when I and my very constant sketching companion and trusty friend, Michael Marler, used annually to start for our grand tours through Wales or Scotland, or for the remote fishing villages on our north or south-western coasts ! Perhaps in those days our sketches were not worth much ; but it is a great question whether an increase of artistic power has not been counter-balanced in later times by a decrease of enjoyment power, and whether our subsequent raids up the Rhine, our spurts into Switzerland, and our idlings in Italy

have ever yielded the same adventures, fun, and delight which we got out of our trips in this tight little island; notably a certain one to the Highlands, when Mike, by reason of his Scottish descent, insisted on wearing the kilt, and, what is more, insisted on my wearing one also! *I*, forsooth, who am as much like a Hottentot as a Highlander! *I*, who am dark and swarthy of skin, black of hair and beard, and of aspect, generally, Italian (I know my enemies call it unmistakably Hebraic)! *I*, who am decidedly portly as to figure, dumpy as to stature, and cockney as to dialect!

Fancy Mario, shortened by a foot and as fat as Lablache, wearing a kilt, driving a hansom, and hailing you with the familiar 'Ere you are, sir!' and this may give a slight notion of the incongruity of my appearance in the Scotch national costume. Nevertheless, being young I wore it, and I am bound to say I never felt more uncomfortable in my life; and without discussing the merits of it as a covering for the lower portion of the human frame, I think I may be allowed here to assert that, whatever are its advantages, it is at least not suitable to go out sketching from Nature in. Think only of the three-cornered camp-stool, of the brambles, the whistling winds, and above all the midges; and surely I have hinted enough to make my assertion good.

Yes, think of the midges; it is impossible to forget them. The maddening midges!—the irrepressible, the insignificant, the contemptible, the infinitesimal, the infusorial point-like atoms that ye are. What *can* be said that will adequately describe the monstrous tor-

ture to which you subject the faithful Michael Marler? He may light fires of peat all round his encampment, he may smoke himself silly, he may oil himself like a salad, he may bedevil himself like a kidney with all manner of antidotes, he may wear a mask of gauze, and so make himself the ghostly terror of the neighbourhood, and become a wonder at which 'strange things come up to look,' but he cannot defy or combat the sling and sting of the outrageous midge.

An absence of wind, a certain moisture in the air, and the approach of sundown are conditions which render you a helpless victim to the insect who is as a rattle-snake compared to the mosquito. The atmosphere consists of him; you inhale him, you are pressed upon by him, you slaughter him by myriads with every breath and motion; you see through him, as through a fog; you swallow him if you eat; you drink him if you drink; you paint him into your picture if you are capable under such circumstances of painting at all: which you are not, the chances being that ten minutes after his arrival you are rushing madly about like an infuriated bull, having in your frenzy of irritation spiked yourself on your camp-stool, capsized your easel, thrown your wet sketch down flat on its face, trodden on your palette, nearly hung yourself in a tent-rope, and fallen head over heels two or three times in your blind and impotent rage.

This state of things lasts until a friendly puff of wind gives you a moment's respite by sending your enemy floating cloudlike away in another direction, and in a feeble dejected condition, feverish and bewildered,

you make an effort to continue your labours ; but ' when the wind drops, then the work stops,' for he is back again as thick as ever, and your skin must be as the hide of rhinoceros if you can disregard him for long. He is an incurable disease, the greatest affliction to which you can be subjected at your ' easel in the air.' The true Highland midge is without a rival, and you will never forget him if he has once taken an interest in your whereabouts.

Although he is incontestably the first in the catalogue of the painter's *contretemps*, there are, nevertheless, many more terribly trying to the temper. Second to the midge is the wind, the cold bitter wind, which greatcoat and plaid entirely fail to keep out ; which is so strong that it seems necessary to lash your brush to your benumbed fingers, whilst pecks of dust are driven into your eyes, and your moist colours are dried up and covered by the grit ; which rips up your paper or wabbles your canvas just at that moment when the finest of touches is required, and when with the greatest care and delicacy you are about to make it.

Then suddenly bulge goes the whole thing, and a huge blob of colour is left exactly on the spot where your manipulation should have been most delicate. The wind, which hurls down your easel, or lifts up your umbrella, carrying it away like a parachute, although you had just spent half an hour in securing it with pegs and cords ; which blows down your tent, shutting you up like a mouse in a weight-trap, and finally driving you to the brink of despair.

Or it begins to rain : a gentle drizzle now, slightly, gradually, but surely increasing, until it grows into a tempest, in which, from sheer stress of weather, you are obliged to pack up your ponderous traps, just at the moment when you were beginning to 'feel' your sketch, which, being stowed away in a sloppy condition, is very likely ruined. You have five miles to walk home, and when you arrive, wet through, dejected, and miserable, out comes the sun piping hot, as if nothing had happened.

The sun, too, frequently takes to shining in a perfectly cloudless sky the day after you have begun a very gray drawing, with lots of rolling clouds and a good deal of shadow in it. He goes on shining persistently, and your subject looks so different that you are obliged to start another ; then down comes the rain, and you are weeks perhaps before you get any semblance of the old effect.

It is highly exhilarating also, after a long journey to a spot you had fixed on for its quiet and beauty, to find it occupied by two or three rival artists, men you have never seen before, horrible snobs whom it is unnecessary to say you hope you may never see again, and whom you hate from the bottom of your heart, but who are quite good-natured amiable fellows, and, spotting you as one of their order, instantly claim familiar acquaintance with you, ask where you are staying, want to see what you have been doing, and show symptoms of their intentions to fasten on to you for the rest of your time.

Or again, just as you are getting into a difficulty



with your sketch, and it begins to look utterly hopeless and disgusting, a party of fashionable tourists, of course with a lot of very pretty girls, arrive, and surround you, politely asking permission to look at your drawing. That's a pleasant moment, that is. You can't churlishly refuse; and the mortifying conviction that they justly vote you 'a muff' fixes itself in your mind, and is not dislodged, when you hear a sort of suppressed titter, or a few indistinct words, such as, 'Do as well myself;' or, 'I don't think much of that.'

Now it is not agreeable to be disturbed at your work by tourists; but if you are to be subjected to the annoyance, why could they not have come yesterday, when you made such a successful sketch, and when, consequently, no one came by to admire it?

The unexpected inroad of a party of ladies all bent on sketching, and who, with their flapping books and pencils, sit down all in a row, as near to you as possible, so that they may get the same subject, is another pleasant little episode in the painter's life out of doors, but one that fortunately does not last very long; for your lady sketcher, as a rule, soon gets tired, and, unless very enthusiastic, does not attempt to 'colour,' as she calls it, on the spot.

A sudden irruption of village school-children, or a gaping crowd of 'yokels,' who, in spite of all you may say and do, persist in surrounding you, staring like idiots or behaving like brutes, also come, like charming 'accidentals,' within the category of painters' miseries; and to these you may add even some items of danger—

such as crumbling cliffs, treacherous tides, swollen torrents, and savage animals.

Fortunately, however, this medal has its reverse, upon which the characters are more deeply graven, and far more pleasant to contemplate. Shall we turn it round and look at this side? I think so.

Let us watch Mike the Marler, as he arrives one bright afternoon at a little railway station six or seven miles from the spot where, for the next two or three months, he is going to take up his quarters. A light cart waits to receive him and his impedimenta, for he has written to its owner, and is expected.

It is not his first visit by several to these parts, for he is a faithful lover of the beautiful, and returns again and again to any place which has yielded him successful material for his skill.

Let us watch him as he winds along the country lanes, and so on to the breezy downs, chatting familiarly with the honest, brown-faced, blue-jerseyed, fisherman-looking driver of the cart, which, by its strong piscatorial smell, plainly tells you amongst other signs that the sea is not far off. He is inquiring after all his old friends, and listening to the latest quotations of the price of lobsters, soles, turbot, conger-ells, and so forth; to how Jim Garner has gone into partnership with Peter Luff, and how they have got a boat of their own now between them; to a sad story of shipwreck, which happened in the winter off 'Cheer Head'; to a brighter story, of how Miss Mary Bunning, the pretty daughter of the lieutenant of the coastguard station at Cheer, is

going to be married ; and, indeed, to the whole news of the place.

Mike takes the greatest interest in everybody there ; they are all his friends, for long ago he made them so, by showing he could take the helm and handle an oar with the best of them, as well as he could paint the portraits of themselves, their boats, and their cliffs.

Let us watch him as he arrives now at the top of the last hill, and from the brow of which you catch the first glimpse of the quiet fishing village of Cheer. You come on it quite suddenly and unexpectedly, and there, immediately at your feet,

‘ It lies, deep-meadowed, happy,
Fair with orchard lawns and bowery hollows,
Crowned by summer sea.’

Then, down the steepest of hills to the head of the narrow little street, side by side with which runs a gurgling, bright, tiny brook, until they both reach the sandy beach of the cove or natural harbour, which, crowded with fishing-boats, forms the southern and sea side of the village.

Here stands the inn, facing the whitewashed, trim-looking barrack of the coastguard, which just now is forced into dazzling brilliancy by the last rays of the setting sun. There is much excitement, and the painter feels the grip of many a horny hand, and sees the smile of welcome lighting up many an honest weather-beaten face. His coming has been looked forward to with pleasure, and for some days he has been the chief topic of conversation amongst the natives.

'Ah, he be's one of t'right sort, be's Muster Marler,' said Peter Luff, in the strong west-country dialect, to the landlord of the Anchor, when that functionary announced Mike's advent.

'Why, I'd 'low, I'd a seen un now these two years, a-draughtin' at Cheer Head, day arter day, though what they be so fond o' the place for, I can't tell; but theer, I tell ye, he made a draught o' Bob Masters' lugger, and o' Bob Masters too, for the matter o' that, as was as like as natur' itself.'

'Yes,' chimed in another sea-smelling, tar-besmeared bystander; 'and I'd a seen un many a mornin' swim into t'middle o' t'cove and all round about, and come out as red—ay, as red as them 'ere lobsters be when they be biled. Ah, yes, he be t'right sort, he be's. There's many on us down on this here beach as 'll be glad to see un again.'

And much more gossip to the same effect follows, indicative of the estimation in which our painter is held by the inhabitants of the village.

Glad to see him, indeed! Yes, truly they are, if we may judge by the reception he gets.

Marler is soon established in his two little rooms, a second bedroom being also retained for his great ally Laurence Limner, who is shortly to join him, and then these happy friends will be in their glory. You will see them for the first few days idling, as you will think, and lounging at lane-corners, or clambering to the edge of dizzy cliffs, or pottering on the sands, but always at *intervals* shading their eyes, screwing them up, or

shutting one, and then measuring, as it were, with outstretched hands what space the scene they are looking at would occupy upon the canvas. For be it known they are settling upon their subjects, and ever and anon jotting down in a note-book, with rough lines, certain features of the landscape, to see how 'they will come,' or 'compose.'

A little later their decision is made, and their white tents, or umbrellas, peep up from some snug corner under a hedge on the cliff-tops, or down on the open beach. After an early breakfast they start for their work, and trudge along the street, laden with their indispensable paraphernalia, which is slung on to them, strapped on to them, carried under their arms, over their shoulders, and in their hands. With them usually goes a stout lad, likewise strap-begirted, carrying extra or more cumbrous luxuries and necessities for the day's encampment, not the least important of which are the luncheon-basket and the capacious bottle; for it is a long pull, and a thirst-making, to the top of yonder cliff this hot weather.

In the cool of the afternoon we will walk up, and see what Mike is doing, for he is alone there to-day, Laurence having a boat-subject in hand upon the shore, and he will be glad of our company, as an excuse to stretch himself a little while and smoke a pipe.

This, indeed, is a scene fitted to gladden his heart, and make his red beard bristle with excitement. What more can he want?

A yellow, half-reaped, waving wheat-field forms the foreground of his subject; stacks and sheaves, with

harvesters at their work, break up the forms immediately in front; whilst a long graceful line of nodding golden grain, coming in superb and harmonious contrast against the calm but glittering green-blue sea, stretches as far as the middle distance, where abruptly rises a snow-white perpendicular-faced cliff, shelving with its verdant covering gently down on the inland side, and margined along its seaward top by the chalk-line path of the coastguard, as by a silver cord. At its foot we may catch a glimpse of the sand, where, left bare by the ebbing tide, seaweed-rounded heaps of the fallen rock heave up in dark-green masses, whilst a tiny fringe of foam shows its junction with the sea.

Then the coast takes a slight curve, and, winding away into the extreme distance, we have lesser cliffs and undulating hills, but all picturesque in form; and now, seen through a tender haze, which, as the painters say, keeps them in their proper place, they deepen into a purple blue, and melt harmoniously up into the sky. The sky itself, a lovely tone, 'cirrus-decked,' and glowing with a sweet light, forms a fitting canopy to this sunny scene, bringing involuntarily to mind quaint old George Herbert's oft-quoted lines:

' Sweet day, so calm, so fair, so bright,
The bridal of the earth and sky,
The dew will weep thy fall to-night,
For thou must die.'

Marler will use these probably for the Academy catalogue of next year; and under some such title as 'Through the Corn to the Sea,' we shall recognise his

picture, now far advanced. He is in good spirits with his work, and another week of this glorious weather will enable him to finish it; so he will do no more to-day; the effect is declining, and the sight of the calm tempting ocean down there at our feet makes him declare that he must have a swim. Then carefully locking up his canvas in its wooden box, scraping up colour, and cleaning brushes, he leaves the striking of his tent and other matters to the charge of the attendant boy, who has shown his weariness of the whole proceedings by sleeping, throwing stones, jeopardising his life by clambering half way down the cliff to get a bird's nest, fidgeting, and cutting all sorts of antics, and who now rejoices with unrestrained glee in his prospect of freedom.

Then away goes Mike, and takes his bath, splashing and tumbling in the water like a porpoise, to the infinite delight of the inhabitants of Cheer, who evince the liveliest and most wondering interest in this diurnal performance, and who, sea-dogs and good swimmers as most of them are, would yet as soon think of going up in a balloon every day as bathing for the mere pleasure of it. But Mike comes back refreshed and invigorated to his dinner; this well over, he smokes his pipe in the twilight, and takes a deep interest in the fishery doings on the beach.

A little later, and he may put to sea in one of the stout luggers, and be out sometimes all night trawling with his friends her crew; or perhaps just now, seeing that he is hot on his work, he will only take one of three oars, and pull off through the breaming water a

mile or two, to fish with a line for congers till one in the morning ; or perhaps he will idle and moon about upon the little pier, but always noting well the effects of colour, form, or character, sunset or moonrise, coming storm or summer lightning. Then to bed, to sleep a sleep sounder than any top's, and to be up and on the cliff again by the time the right effect comes on.

And thus will his days go by, far into the autumn, until the nipping cold and bleak winds of approaching winter drive him once more back, with a stock of renewed and vigorous health, to his London life, where, midst congratulations and consultations over many pipes with his brothers of the brush upon the work he has brought home, he presently begins to reap the golden fruits of the summer trip.

A mass of valuable sketches is laid up in his portfolios, and all the pictures that he means to sell are sold.

Who, then, shall say that the landscape-artist's life is not a jolly one ? Where shall we look to find a better ?

The very means by which he lives, his art itself, fitful and capricious in its issues though it sometimes be, becomes the source of all his pleasure. He is never so happy as when at work, provided that work be fairly successful. Nothing in the world pleases him better than to paint his picture, except to sell it afterwards.

There are no conditions of existence, it would seem to me, more satisfactory than his, especially when, unlike the figure-painter, nearly all his work must be done at his ' easel in the air.'

IN THE FAMILY.

I SHALL never be able to acquit myself of blame for the share I took in the tragedy ; but, Heaven knows, I advised for the best.

Max Hermselt was always what men call rather a peculiar fellow ; that is to say, he had odd notions about most things, but especially upon all belonging to the supernatural. He did not, although educated up to the highest standard of nineteenth-century excellence, disbelieve in ghostly manifestations ; on the contrary, spirit-rapping, with its various ramifications, was to him a very serious business, in which he would always maintain there was much more than was ' ever dreamt of in our philosophy.' The idea of scouting it as a juggle and imposture never entered his head ; for his was one of those minds on which it had from the very earliest taken strong hold. Although by no means of a joyous disposition, he was kindly and good-natured, and not without a dry sense of humour ; nevertheless he would bear no banter or chaff upon spiritualism. So thin-skinned did he at last become, that I for one, loving him as I did, decided for the future not to touch upon it, and determined never to be led into an argument, however startling his recitals and accounts of wonders witnessed. Nor was it seldom that my resolu-

tion was put to the proof; for he loved to dilate upon details, and was constant in his attendance at *séances* in many a well-known house.

Another of Max's weak and touchy points was homœopathy. Afflicted with an incipient form of heart-disease, of which he never spoke, and of which it is possible he had been kept in profound ignorance,—he, nevertheless, had ordinarily good health; but being naturally crotchety and fanciful, the doctrines of Hahnemann offered great attractions to him. He was continually taking globules and mysterious infinitesimal doses—always, he asserted, with the most satisfactory results; and he would not so much as consult a dentist who went upon allopathic principles.

The German blood that flowed through his veins was hardly likely to counteract these tendencies, which were certainly intensified and strengthened by the unhappy circumstances which had left him, at the age of eight-and-forty, a solitary and miserable man. He followed the profession of an architect, and when very young fell in love with the daughter of the gentleman to whom he was articled; but, possessing no independence whatsoever, he indulged no vain hopes, nor gave the slightest utterance to his feelings. Nevertheless, it would seem that he failed in entirely concealing them, for they were divined and reciprocated with equal intensity by Esther Cosserat.

Thus a tacit understanding grew up between them. They felt that they must wait; the fire smouldered, but was never subdued; the fervour and earnestness of

their natures fanned it constantly, and although the matter was never mentioned, each knew, as well as if it had been spoken, that they loved and were beloved. Max used occasionally to visit at Mr. Cosserat's, and he and Esther not unfrequently met in society. I, and the rest of the world, now and then had an idea that they were fond of each other ; but, knowing the circumstances of the case, we shrugged our shoulders, and regretted that it could not be.

Eventually Max went into business for himself, but without more than moderate success. Esther remained single ; and her father, an unutterably selfish man, appeared only too glad, widower as he was, to retain the services of his daughter as his housekeeper, treating her with very little more show of respect and affection than if she had really been so. Consequently her life was far from happy, although she had a certain amount of liberty, and entered into many little gaieties. The want of brightness in her home, together with the pent-up passion gnawing at her heart, gradually began to tell upon her looks, once so fresh and blooming. It was well known that her father had rejected several eligible offers for her hand ; and this fact, combined with the only partial worldly success of Max, still held the latter back : his sensitive disposition could not brook the idea of the certainty of a refusal by Mr. Cosserat.

Matters remained much in this state for some ten long years, when the sudden death of her father left Esther Cosserat sole possessor of his large fortune ; thus, as it was supposed, clearing away every obstacle

to the union of the lovers. Therefore the world was not a little surprised when, after several months had elapsed, no rumours of their marriage were afloat. But it again shrugged its shoulders, and merely said, 'Max Hermself was always a peculiar fellow; no one could ever quite make him out.' Intimate, however, as I was with him, and sharing most of his confidences, it was no mystery to me.

I shall never forget that morning when he rushed into my chambers the picture of despair and misery.

'Heavens and earth, man!' I cried, 'what is the matter?'

'O my friend!' he replied, falling into a chair, and covering his face with both hands, 'I want all your sympathy and counsel.'

For some minutes he was unable to proceed, so choked was he with convulsive emotion. Calming himself a little at last, he went on to tell me that he had but an hour ago sought Esther, and for the first time had given form in words to that passion which had for so long lain nearest to his heart, and which he so well believed she reciprocated.

"'Esther,'" I said, 'he went on, "'it is now six months since your father died; you can guess why I am here—surely I need not say much. In one word, may we not in six months more become man and wife?" To my intense surprise and consternation her reply was, "No, no, Mr. Hermself, I can never become—and you, when you know all, will never wish to take me for—*your wife.*" "How!" I exclaimed; "what is there


that I can ever know that should alter or even modify the life-long wish of my heart?" "I will tell you," she went on, "and in doing so I will not attempt to conceal—what you have, I believe, long taken for granted—I will not attempt to conceal that I love you; and it is because I do so that I will not deceive you, or hold back a great secret, a great misery, which has dawned upon my life." She had hitherto been very quiet; her pale earnest face, worn and pallid as it has latterly become, looked inexpressibly sad; but no tears started to her eyes, no hesitation was in her voice; she seemed to have braced herself, and been quite prepared to make the revelation at all costs; but now, as the words that followed escaped her lips, she broke down, and through the most heart-breaking sobs she said, "My mother is still alive! Yes, Mr. Hermselt, my father's position before the world was a lie; on his deathbed he revealed to me the terrible truth. My mother did not die, as I and everybody generally supposed, when I was born, but she went out of her mind, and has been a hopeless lunatic ever since."

'Think,' continued Max, seizing my hand, 'think how this fell upon me; think how frightful is the coincidence thus revealed; for I will now confide to you what I have never mentioned to living man—there is also madness in *my* family, ay and by the nearest of kin. My father has been dead twenty years, but he died in a madhouse! Think of this, my friend,' he went on, passionately, every nerve quivering with emotion. 'How can I, with these facts staring me in the

face,—how can I, how dare I, think of marrying? Now and again, when his death was fresh upon me, I have thought such a visitation might be hereditary; and, when I first saw and loved Esther, it flashed across my mind as a possible barrier to my marrying. For a while the dread haunted me without ceasing; but I set it at rest, as I thought, for ever. I held converse with my dear father's spirit more than once upon the very point, and received his assurance that I need have no fear—no fear so long as she with whom I married had no taint or suspicion of the same fell malady on her side; and now the one only woman in the world whom I ever loved, or could love, discloses to me the only thing that could have kept us asunder.'

To console, to advise under such painful conditions was a hard task. How I got through it, or what words I used, is of little consequence. There was no need to dispute the spiritual manifestation in the affair; *that* signifies nothing. The facts at any rate were stern realities, and could not be gainsaid. Such a marriage, indeed, would appear to no one as justifiable; but the horror of its contingencies seemed to lay peculiar hold upon Max's sensitive and superstitious nature, clenched as they were in his mind by the warning which he firmly believed he had received from his father's spirit.

Many and many were the terrible scenes I had after this with the poor fellow, torn as he was two ways between duty and love; but at the expiration of a year, when I found that his health was giving way, in spite of the resources of homœopathy; that the heart-disease



was manifesting itself in an ugly way ; and that she, to whom through all he was so devotedly attached, was equally suffering, I am bound to admit that I advised him to marry in spite of everything. They were neither of them now in the first flush of youth ; and if, by good fortune, there should be no family—why, no harm could be done ; and if children there were—well, in this world we must take some things for granted, and in that case we must hope for the best. I felt at least certain that I should be neutralising an actual and positive evil by only running the risk of incurring a possible and perhaps imaginary one, after all.

My position was deeply responsible. I am an old man now, and there is little that can ever again move or disturb me ; but when I look back over the lapse of years, truly my heart is stirred, and I pray that God may hold me blameless.

Max always clung strongly to my advice in all practical matters, and I knew that he would follow whatever course I put before him. My own mind was fully made up, and I determined to override all the painful scruples that had torn the hearts of the unhappy pair. It was clear to me that, loving each other as they did, they would, unmarried, at the best but linger through a miserable existence, even should not the morbid state of their minds in itself prove an exciting cause of insanity. This appeared by no means improbable, when I remembered all that had been revealed about the antecedents of their respective families. After a time, therefore, the strong unswerving attachment

existing between them, together with my decided and urgent advice, banished every fear and doubt; and so, by the time the world had just done shrugging its shoulders at the extraordinary apathy and tardy behaviour of Mr. Hermsehl, and had settled in its own grave, sapient, and conclusive fashion that there was to be no engagement after all, it was thrown into convulsive gesticulations again one morning by reading in the *Times* of the marriage of 'Maximilian Hermsehl, Esq., to Esther, only child of the late J. Cosserat, Esq.'

The wedding was of the quietest; and, after a brief honeymoon, Max and his wife settled down in an old dwelling called Glade House, belonging to the Cromwellian period, and which indeed was once the abode of Hampden. It stood on the north-west outskirts of the metropolis, in a rural quiet bit of country, that has not even to the present day been much invaded by railways or stucco-fronted villas.

Standing back from the high road, and hidden from public gaze by a high wall (save where we get a peep of it through the elaborate iron gates), the little mansion, in the midst of its own quaint, old-fashioned, well-planted garden, low roofed and ceilinged, with its pillar-supported entrance-hall, upon which you come straight from the mean carriage-drive by two descending steps, and with its heavy-beamed, narrow-windowed, oak-panelled rooms, gives a general impression which is the very reverse of cheerful. There is a gloomy puritanical aspect about the whole place and its approaches

very characteristic of the times in which it was built.

Yet here, for a brief space of ten months, Esther spent the only really happy time of her life. Max went to town five days a week; for of course, by the usual perversity of things, as soon as he was made by his marriage independent in a measure of his profession, his business immediately began to improve, and he had plenty of work to do; but this only gave an extra zest to his leisure hours, which were spent in the closest companionship with his wife. 'Things,' as he said, 'seemed almost too bright to last;' and, alas! they were not destined to remain so long.

All the heavy forebodings and sad thoughts which had held Max and Esther apart after the death of Mr. Cosserat seemed to have been entirely cast aside in the anticipation of the joy that was about to enter the old house; for Esther was soon to become a mother.

I, perhaps, was the only person *now* who saw in this fact the little cloud which might in the end overspread with gloom the present brightness of my dear friend's home. I, perhaps, was the only person who looked upon the forthcoming event with regret, anxiety, and doubt. It was the one thing I had dreaded, and had hoped would not happen. In the indefinable, shadowy sort of presentiment which took possession of me, I, for the first time, realised the responsibility I had incurred. I hardly dared to give my fears a shape; but if trouble were at hand, I knew that it *must* spring

from the very happiness I thought I had secured for my two friends.

It was much nearer than even I had thought. A boy was born, and his existence cost his mother her life. I have called this a tragedy, and perhaps there is no scene in it more gloomy or terrible than Glade House afforded from that fatal time for many years afterwards. The violent bursts of grief that poor Max gave way to in the early days of his sorrow were succeeded by a stolid dejected misanthropy most pitiable to behold, and which gave me the greatest anxiety. In fact, there is no doubt that his reason to some extent did give way under the trial. He neglected his profession entirely, shut himself up in the old house, and for years and years I was the only person whom he ever saw besides his servants and child. His means were so ample that the few affairs requiring attention were entirely managed through me, and I was only too glad to be of the least service. All my efforts, however, to alleviate his sorrow were fruitless; he refused to change his abode, and, still nursing his grief, found his one dreary pleasure in frequenting the places in which he had, with his dear companion, spent his pleasantest hours. All the little trifles of her every-day life were preserved undisturbed just as she had left them; and I was not surprised, knowing what I knew of him, one day to hear him say that she was still periodically with him.

'She is only away for a time, my friend. I constantly see her, constantly she is with me; but she never speaks. No power of mine can break her silence;

beyond a rushing sort of wind, which heralds her approach, there is no sound. I alone hear the wind, and I doubt not that she is visible to me only; but that I do see her is certain: never attempt to dispute that!’

Heaven forbid that I should have ever thought of doing so! It was, with one exception, his only comfort; and in his then morbidly-melancholy state of mind it would have been most cruel and useless, even had it been possible, to have disturbed his conviction. It was the one point upon which, in plain language, he was mad. Perfectly sane, rational, and harmless upon all others, there was no need for interference with him upon this; especially as, strange to say, his health did not otherwise appear to suffer. But it was very painful and sad to see.

I generally contrived to pay him a visit once or twice a month, and usually spent a day and night at the house, and thus repeatedly witnessed the effects of the hallucination which possessed poor Max. Sometimes it took one form, sometimes another. Occasionally in the midst of our conversation he would leave a word half unuttered, tighten his fingers in his palm, turn deadly pale, and, with the drops of cold perspiration breaking out on his brow, fix his straining eyes on the door. Gradually his rigid features would relax, and a sort of smile would break over his face; he would close his eyes, and sometimes sink into a state of half unconsciousness; or sometimes he would turn to me, and we would resume our talk.

But, saving and excepting one other instance far more awful, the remembrance of which will never leave me, the first time that I ever saw Max under this illusion was the most terrible. We were sitting together close to a little table near the window, but facing the door. On a sudden, a book which Max held in his hand fell to the ground. I looked at him, and saw a most singular expression on his countenance. He appeared to be listening intently, his eyes dilated, and their deep burning eagerness increased the deadly and ghastly pallor of his face. He half rose from his chair, and said in a whisper,

‘Do you not hear it—the wind? through the trees—into the hall—up the stairs—along the passage—louder and louder—there! it comes! it presses against the door! it bears her, my wife!—there! there she stands! but I cannot reach her! and she will not speak!—O! one word, Esther!’

Extending his hands beseechingly, and with one imploring cry, the light faded out of his eyes, and he fell back, desponding and helpless, into his chair.

I need hardly say there was no sound of wind, or slightest movement of the door, and, of course, nothing was to be seen.

The room in which we were, and which Max chiefly used, was on the first floor, the gloomiest of all the gloomy apartments in the house, and in the summer was made much more so by the proximity of some tall elms growing in front of the window. It was at the end of a long passage, upon which gave out the doors

of the many bedrooms, the staircase being at its furthest end, the first flight of which faced the entrance-door into the pillar-supported hall above referred to. This construction and arrangement of the house must be remembered, in order that what eventually happened may be easily understood.

Although, at present, I have said little of the child, whose coming into the world had heralded so much grief, he was a very paramount piece of interest in the old house. He was a fine, high-spirited, infant, full of life and strength, and he alone had the power, with his little petulant, wilful, loving ways, of bringing a smile to his father's lips. Max watched him constantly, put the most careful people about him; nothing passed unnoticed that could affect his welfare. Perhaps the care was *too* constant, the anxiety *too* excessive; and as the boy grew and felt his strength, the unnecessary petty restraints and curbs, kindly as they were, fretted and irritated.

At last it was found that to school the boy must go; and, at seven years of age, he was put under the care of a tutor, who received only a few pupils about the younger Max's own age. The little fellow soon became a great favourite at school; but nothing could curb his indomitable will, which showed itself in a thousand ways. Still, the disposition was so noble and good, and his heart so tender, that anything like severity was out of the question. In his holidays he turned the whole house topsy-turvy; invaded his father's library; teased the servants, who gave in to all his whims;

devoured volume after volume of 'travellers' wonders' and 'adventures;' and finally ended by declaring that he must go to sea. Against this his father resolutely set his face, and considered the question put at rest for ever. But during one of my periodical visits to my friend a few weeks before Christmas, and when the lad must have been in his thirteenth year, we received a telegram from his tutor announcing that young Max had run away, he feared, to sea; that every inquiry had been set on foot; and that he would himself be at Glade House the following day to bring a further and, he trusted, a more hopeful account.

Max read the words steadily through, folded the paper, looked up at me, and said, with a sort of preternatural calmness, 'We must be up and doing, my friend; every sea-port must be telegraphed to, every inquiry made, and advertisements inserted in every newspaper. Why did I trust the boy to others? But he will come back—yes, yes, he will be found. Only'—and here his voice faltered for the first time—'only he was all that remained to me tangibly of her; and this second blow is more than I can bear.'

The same intense look passed over my friend's face that I had often seen before, and which was now followed by great prostration and half-unconsciousness. The housekeeper and myself carried him to his room, where he remained for some days, taking no notice of anything. Mr. Bude, the boy's tutor, arrived the day after the fatal telegram. Max, however, was too ill to see him; but I found that no tidings of the runaway had

been received, and that hitherto all inquiries had been fruitless.

When, after a time, Max began to recover, he wanted to hear every particular, and to know all that had been done. I had not been idle, as may well be supposed; but no clue whatever to the fate of our wilful but most precious boy could I gain.

To my surprise, Max, when he had somewhat recovered from the first effects of the blow, seemed to put forth an energy and determination long strange to him. He insisted upon going personally to every seaport throughout the kingdom; incessantly journeying on, never resting, asking and receiving vain questions and replies, he seemed to know no fatigue, either of mind or body.

At last every source of information was exhausted, and he returned home. So dearly was I attached to my friend, that it was with intense sorrow I found myself obliged just now to leave England for a time on business. I knew not how long I might be absent; but when we were together the night before my departure, I was relieved by noticing in Max a more vigorous active tone of mind than I had ever seen in him since his first great trouble.

He told me he thought he should take up his profession again. 'And,' said he, when shaking hands as we parted for the night, 'I believe I have been too much of a dreamer, my friend. I have been, I fear, a little selfish. I have no need to work for money; my object henceforth must be to work for my unknown

suffering fellow-creatures—for those who have no claim upon me save that of common brotherhood ; and it may be (you know, you, like the rest of the world, have often called me a singular fellow) that the giving out of much love will bring to me again, at the last, those whom I have loved and lost.'

The calm, gentle, yet steadfast expression of his face gave me every hope that life, even for him, might yet possess some brightness. I did not see him the next morning, but left Glade House early, with a heavy heart, I must confess, in spite of my friend's improved state of mind.

The business which had called me away from home detained me much longer abroad than I had expected. I kept up a constant correspondence with Max, who appeared to be busying himself in carrying out various benevolent and kindly schemes. He spoke frequently of the boy, often hopefully, but sometimes with a yearning regret that was profoundly sad. But no tidings of him had been received, though no opportunity was ever allowed to escape that promised the very faintest clue to discovery.

Still, however, the tone of Max's letters was cheerful, until suddenly one reached me which was desponding and mournful to a degree, so different from those I had hitherto received, that I felt there must be some especial reason for it. He spoke of failing health, and of a terrible sense of loneliness and depression, which had become, he said, almost unbearable. Christmas was not far off, and he begged me to make an effort to

come to him as soon as possible, in order that he might not pass that period, which was fraught with so many sad associations, quite alone. Of course, I could not resist such an appeal. I threw everything over, in order to reach England and Glade House before Christmas-eve.

I arrived in London on the 23d of December, and by midday on the 24th I was with my friend. The weather had been singularly calm and mild for the time of year; but on this Christmas-eve it entirely changed: wild blasts of wind and rain swept over the country; and soon after I was safely housed, Max and I were glad to pull our chairs round the fire, pile on wood, and make up our minds not to stir out of doors that day.

I was painfully struck by my friend's altered appearance: his pale wan face, hollow voice, and attenuated frame spoke of continual mental and bodily suffering; thus showing that, in spite of his determination to rise above his trouble, it had worked, in connection with his deep-seated disease, only too surely and steadily on his health; and he was indeed, as I have said, at the age of eight-and-forty, a solitary, suffering, and miserable man. But he seemed cheered by my presence; and I urged him, after we had dined, to tell me all that had passed during the years of my absence. We withdrew to his usual sitting-room, which looked precisely the same as it had done in former days. The bare branches of the elm-trees swayed and creaked and moaned, as the wind swept through them in fitful gusts, mingling its weird rushing cadence with the mournful

voice of Max, as he began to tell me of all that was upon his mind.

'You left me, my friend,' he said, 'almost happy—hopeful at least. I tried to do good; I trust I have. Strangely enough, from the very hour of my receiving that telegram, now just about this time five years ago, until I wrote my last letter to you, I had never seen *her*. Yet this did not surprise me much; another now wanted her watchful care—our boy. I knew not where he was; I could not hold out a hand to guide; but *she* knew, *she* guided, *she* led; and so long as she did not appear to me, I felt sure, at least, that the boy was safe; and if harm threatened him, or if he were to die, I knew that she would come to me again, and that I should know of him through her. Well, my friend, the night before I wrote last to you, she *did* appear. Yes; but not alone. There—there, at that door, she stood, with our boy beside her. Not the fair, golden-haired child I had watched so often whilst asleep, but a tall, strong, fearless lad, such as he might have been. One hand rested on *his* head; the other she extended towards me. For a second they stood, and I saw them no more. I know now that he is dead.'

'Nay, nay,' I interposed.

'Or, if not dead,' he continued, 'some change is at hand; I cannot say what (for upon this point the spirits with whom I hold converse are vague); yet, whatever betide, *she* is with him, *has* been with him ever since he went away; and were he here now, even standing in this room, I know that he would tell you that *he* has

seen her, as I have. She keeps us together in thought by her love ; and if he is restored to me, it will be by *her*, and by *her* means alone.'

I had barely begun to realise how entirely Max was subdued and influenced by this strange belief in the supernatural, when I was startled by observing a great change pass over his features. He had thrown himself back as he finished speaking ; but now, half raising himself, he grasped the arms of his chair. The same set rigid look, that I knew only too well, returned. The eyes dilated, and fixed themselves on the door ; he began murmuring like a man in his sleep—low indistinct words : ' Esther—wife—the boy ! ' I tried to arouse him ; it was in vain. And now—are my *own* senses deceiving me ? do I not hear in reality, through the rushing of the wind—which, indeed, rises higher and higher—the faint sound of the gate-bell in the distance, followed by a hurrying of feet ? I, too, look at the door, expecting I know not what. Max's tones become louder. Utterly unconscious of the noise below, or of the actual footsteps now rapidly nearing our room, he cries only, ' The wind—the wind ! Do you not hear it—across the hall, and up the stairs, along the passage ? Now—now they are coming ! There, see, they are at the door—mother and boy together again ! '

Max half rises ; I lay my hand on his arm ; he shakes it off, tries to totter across the room ; and through the wind I hear the footsteps, now on the very threshold. The door flies open ; and there, there—indeed, one part of the vision no phantom, but a living

breathing presence — stands our wanderer. . . .
'Father!' he exclaims; but the long-yearned-for voice brings no reply. Max lies lifeless in my arms; the loving heart is still!

Poor boy! truly his was a pitiable fate. He accused himself of having, as it were, caused the death of both his parents. 'My very existence,' he said, 'was purchased by the death of my mother; and now, by my thoughtless precipitate return, I have killed the dearest and tenderest father that ever a boy had. And, O, how he must have grieved over my silence all these last few years! But I hoped to make all happy again when I came back.'

He would take no comfort; but as soon as his poor father was laid quietly in his last home by the side of his wife, young Hermself declared his intention of leaving England for ever. He has taken his patrimony to Australia; and he and I shall never meet again.

AGAINST THE WIND.

How disagreeable the wind is! Disagreeable, indeed! I should think it was! That's a very mild phrase. Abominable, detestable, atrocious, are all mild phrases, when used in connection with wind.

I hate wind. Pooh, pooh, stuff and nonsense! don't tell me it is wicked to hate it because it is a natural phenomenon. Scarlet fever and smallpox are natural phenomena, but I should not be considered wicked, I suppose, for hating them.

I am prepared to show that wind is not only disagreeable, but nowadays totally unnecessary; for what possible utility can there be in an element which at the best will only drive a vessel through the water at about half the rate of speed obtainable from an ordinary steam-engine?

Windmills are no longer requisite as a means of preparing our daily bread. Steam can be easily made to do their work as efficiently, and with much more persistency; for we all know that 'when the wind drops then the mill stops,' and the wind always does drop when there is most corn to be ground.

The art of ballooning is at present in far too undeveloped a state to induce any one to argue that wind is

requisite on that account, and until some means have been invented to regulate the speedy transit of an aeronautical machine from London to Paris with regularity, punctuality, and despatch, wind ought to be suppressed. In this nineteenth century there is no possible need for it; for beyond propelling ships, turning windmills, and elevating balloons, I should like to know what useful occupation can be found for Boreas. Boys addicted to kite-flying might suffer some deprivation, but boys have to suffer, and their interests must not be weighed against those of the community at large; and men who adopt the system of 'flying kites' do so as a means of 'raising the wind,' which in itself is another reason why there should be none to raise.

So much for its inutility. But I am now farther prepared to show that there is nothing so absolutely tormenting amongst external circumstances as wind; there is nothing so calculated to bring down upon you the derision and ridicule of your fellow-men; nothing which so thoroughly debases you in your own eyes, and so detracts from that nobility of deportment of which you are justly proud.

Meeting it, for instance, at a street-corner, it tears at you with such ungovernable fury that you inevitably lose your much-prized erect and soldier-like carriage, and become quite bent and crippled, as you combat the force of the gale.

Craning forward, with head bowed to the superior power, tears streaming down your face, and your legs nearly taken from under you, how can you fail to know

that you are presenting a most pitiable appearance? The corner turned, however, things are not mended, but only reversed, and your enemy swoops at you now from behind, running you along, as if you were a little boy again under the torture of some bigger playmate, taken by the scruff of your neck, and hurried on with might and main, at the will of your tormentor; a mere cork, a feather, a most contemptible waif and stray. You vainly endeavour to maintain a perpendicular posture; why, bless your heart! you are leaning backwards at a most acute and preposterous angle, and your coat-tails are probably flapping over each shoulder, your knees are useless uncontrollable joints, and your arms, if left a moment to themselves, are blown helplessly about, like linen hanging out to dry! This is bad, but by no means the worst. Is it possible to conceive any condition more humiliating than wanting to blow your nose under such circumstances? for, of course, the higher the wind, the more your nose wants blowing. Both your hands are occupied, one on the top of your hat, squeezing it on to your forehead, to the utter stoppage of all circulation, and an inevitable headache, the other clutching madly at the brim to prevent its spinning high up into the air. Yes, there is another stage, more humiliating even than this, and that is when, at last driven to despair, you succeed in extracting your pocket-handkerchief, but, unable to make the slightest use of it with one hand (for it flies straight out from you, like a flag, or nearly blinds you by flapping in your face), you relinquish for a moment the

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grip your other hand has on your hat, and the wind does at last succeed in carrying it off.

This is the climax of your misery, ignominy, and degradation. You turn suddenly round, and the first thing you do is to run bump up against the person immediately following you, inevitably treading upon his pet corn. He execrates you; but heeding him not, you dash madly after your lost property, which, by this time, is two hundred yards down the street, just passing under the feet of a cab-horse, and only escaping by a miracle utter annihilation from the wheels of the succeeding omnibus.

Away you go after it, amidst the gibes of the men, the delight of the boys, and the simpering sniggers of the women, for I maintain there is no class of humanity whose risible faculties are proof against the ridiculous appearance of an individual running after his hat when it has been blown off. They have no sympathy for you, and though they will make vigorous efforts to stop it, they do so with a certain air of mockery and derision.

If they succeed in capturing the fugitive they can't hand it to you, no, not even the politest of them, without an ill-suppressed chuckle, and an expression of hope that it is not very much damaged, well knowing all the while that having been rolled in the mud, floated through a puddle, twice kicked by the horses, once crushed with a wheel, and several times stamped upon in the pursuit, it must be all but done for; yet, confound them, they will have the hypocrisy to say they hope you will be able to put it to rights!

If you do not hate your species at that moment, well, then, you are a better-tempered man than I take you to be. The degradation of your condition is not lessened one atom if you effect the capture yourself, for by so doing you narrowly escape being knocked down and run over, and anathematised by drivers for obliging them to pull up to save your life. You nearly dash your brains out against the lamp-post, by which and the gutter your hat has been brought up, as stooping you make a savage grab at it when it is once within your reach. And, O, what a sight it presents when at last you have succeeded in regaining it! Battered, muddy, and wet, probably with several holes driven through it from your having wildly endeavoured to spear it like an otter with the point of your umbrella, it has become the most dilapidated and woe-begone piece of personal attire that can well be imagined.

But you are a philosopher of course, and try by a sickly smile to appear as if it was of no consequence. To carry this fiction a little further you disdain wiping it very much; you give it a shake, smooth it with your hand, to the entire destruction of your glove, and cram it on your head, regardless of the grit and mud (for what do you care about such trifles?) which now mingle with your hair, trickle down your neck, and lacerate your forehead.

You can't see what you look like, and you pretend not to understand that the rude remarks of the passers-by have any reference to you. The impertinent inquiries from the boys as to what tradesman it is

connected with the hatting interest who receives your patronage must be addressed to some individual on the other side of the way, and you naturally conclude that the observation habitually in use amongst our street Arabs, 'What a shocking bad 'at!' is a spontaneous exclamation that, like the rest of its kind, is *apropos* to nothing.

It is only when a friendly plate-glass window reveals to you your appearance that you allow the slightest suspicion to dawn upon you that your *personnel* is the point in question. Nevertheless, you continue to smile, being an individual of no ordinary strength of will; but at the same time you take the earliest opportunity of retiring from public gaze, by diving into your own or a friend's quarters to refit, considering yourself extremely lucky that you were able to do so before running against the young person whom you slightly affect.

Now mark! this is the result of wind. Nothing but that detestable tearing wind, which, besides all that has happened, has blown your hair behind your ears, covered your face with smuts, filled your eyes with miniature paving-stones, and given you a supply of impromptu tooth-powder sufficient to last you for a week. It has ruffled your temper together with your beard, disarranged the fit of your garments, given you a headache, in a word, utterly ruined your comfort and personal appearance.

Or, again, suppose you are a sportsman and addicted to fly-fishing—a nice time you will have of it then in a high wind! How utterly some of your most dexterous

casts will be rendered abortive, and your delicate gear frequently destroyed from being hitched high and tight into the branches of a tree !

Wind, too, is the sworn enemy of the rifleman, and a Ross or a Jopling will sometimes miss the target, and go plump into the mud, at but two hundred yards, if a fitful gust of wind only happens to come across the range just as the trigger is being gently drawn.

Driving in a high wind is another occasion for being forcibly reminded what a mistake this element is.

You are a pretty good whip, and you know where to let the lash fall if the pace is to be increased ; but don't you think it ! the wind catches the thong, and twists it cleverly into part of the harness. Yes, there it is, tied tightly, just as if you had got down and done it with your own hands. You can't loosen it ; the more you wriggle it about the firmer it holds. You make up your mind to leave it ; but just now the horse wants the whip terribly, for he likes the wind even less than you do, and is by no means inclined to put out much pace against it. Eventually you stop, and get out, at the risk, of course, of everything being turned topsy-turvy in the way of rugs, aprons, and other contents of your vehicle, which are thus all exposed to the fury of the blast.

To my thinking, all wind is alike disgusting ; and I consider that when it blows from the south-west it is quite as objectionable, if there be much of it, as Mr. Kingsley's brave ' north-easter '—the one overwhelms you with heat and moisture, the other subdues you by cold and drought. They alike irritate you, and it is

only according to your temperament as to which punishes you the most. I have heard that there are people (I am glad to say I don't know them) who like what is called 'a good blow;' who go out to get one, who talk about a fine bracing air, and say, 'That's the thing to give you an appetite, sir!' (I dislike being braced, and never have an appetite.) These, however, are most likely the same monsters who delight in 'a sail,' are fond of yachting, and who select the roughest weather to cross the Channel in; who are perfectly even-tempered, who are never sea-sick, who never catch cold, who smoke the strongest cigars immediately after breakfast, and consider three hours' sleep sufficient rest for any man.

Yes, they are probably all this; but I'll guarantee they are not sketchers from Nature: for I hereby challenge and defy any human being to point out a more abominable or fatal obstruction to sketching from Nature than wind. I stoutly maintain that in no other outdoor pursuit or occupation, either of pleasure or business, does the self-same element so thoroughly baffle you. It is only the artist, therefore, who can estimate fully *how* disagreeable the wind is. The man who has lost his hat is a miserable contemptible wretch; and there may be a dozen other situations equally ignoble and derogatory to our manhood, all resulting from wind, —such as having to sit with the window open when you have influenza, because the chimney smokes; or contending with an umbrella turned inside out; or endeavouring to refold a newspaper whilst reading on the

beach; or your wife's bonnet-strings persistently fluttering across your eyes or mouth at the very moment you were trying to get a peep into that brougham, or going to say 'How do you do?' to an old chum; and many more such miseries; but these I will not even stop to think of whilst picturing to myself the agony and despair of a poor painter on a hill-side or a sea-shore during what sailors call 'a fresh breeze.' It swoops over the cliff at him, it rushes upon him from the front and rear, and from each flank dives into his pockets, wriggles up his trousers, and commits every havoc with his comfort that is possible. But the way in which he suffers more than any other creature living is from the hold it gets upon his easel and apparatus generally.

These are all fair points of attack, of which the enemy takes advantage— But stay! we have surely read something very like this before, for, of course, it was impossible to speak of 'The Easel in the Air' without referring to wind; and if the reader would know what impediments it offers to the operations of the landscape-painter in the field, he has but to turn back to page fifty-five, where the experiences of a distinguished and long-suffering artist are given in all their terrible details, and with a veracity and vividness which must commend themselves to every sketcher from Nature.

No mortal, I repeat, has any adequate conception of the irritation which Boreas can commit but a painter. No; in these days of scientific progress some chemical

apparatus should be contrived to put down wind, just as there is a composition to put out fire.

Nobody really likes it or wants it; a slight movement in the atmosphere is all very well, but wind, high tearing wind, is an abomination.

Animals suffer from it, and dislike it as much as men. Watch the cattle in the fields, and see how they will dodge to get under the lee of a hedge or bank; and whenever they are unfortunate enough to be in pasture without such shelter, they sulkily turn their backs to the aggressor and huddle together in moody disgust.

Precisely in this manner may we see groups of our seafaring population at any ports on the coast, congregating at street-corners, behind boats, and against low walls, ever and anon peeping round with a wistful glance to windward, evidently in the hope of catching some meteorological sign from which they can indulge the hope that the wind is going to abate.

All of them—men, women, and children—hate it; and finally, when we come to consider the frightful casualties from shipwreck, of which many of them have been eye-witnesses, it is not wonderful that they should.

With us landmen the destruction of our best hat or the loss of our temper is generally the worst, perhaps, that can ensue; but to the mariner high wind is fraught with a danger of which we have but little conception. To him it is a matter of life or death; and

‘ In the visitation of the winds,
Who take the ruffian billows by the top,
Curling their monstrous heads, and hanging them,
With deafening clamour, in the slippery shrouds,’

he hears through their roar the wail of desolate wives and mothers, and sees thrown on the shore, from amidst the tossing foaming waves, the motionless form of many a hardy fellow who, till now, had successfully baffled the attacks of that persistent enemy of mankind—a high wind.

THE DRAWING-MASTER'S STORY.

CHRISTMAS comes but once a year, according to the old saying ; and I for one, at least, ought to be glad of the fact, considering some of my experiences, the worst of which, however, fell out after the following fashion.

I am a water-colour painter ; and, moreover, do not deem it derogatory to give lessons in the fascinating art. My enemies and certain gentlemen of the æsthetical and historical schools of painting would call me a drawing-master, and I suppose they would not be far wrong ; at any rate, I am prepared to be so dubbed, nor do I feel myself in any degree humiliated by the designation.

In the course of a long experience, I have had to do with many odd and eccentric people, chief amongst whom was a certain Mr. Canham. (For obvious reasons, I disguise the names of persons and localities.)

Some years ago he called upon me with a view to my giving his daughter instruction in sketching. He was a man of between fifty and sixty, tall, wiry, sandy complexioned, perfectly well bred, and of courteous manners, but generally and emphatically unprepossessing. He informed me that he had studied the theory of painting more or less all his life ; also, that he wished

his daughter to become a great artist. He knew she had talent, and he would leave her entirely in my hands. 'At present,' said he, 'we are staying in town; but in the autumn I hope you may possibly be able to come down to my place and work out of doors; meanwhile, do the best you can to prepare her for this in the drawing-room in Curzon-street.' He mentioned from whom he had heard of me; did not for a moment question my ability to instruct; arranged most liberal terms; and, after rapidly propounding some rather unintelligible theories about art, he took his leave.

For three months, in the London season, I paid periodical visits to his mansion in Mayfair. During this time I became acquainted somewhat intimately with the young lady and her governess. I found she was an only daughter; that her mother had died while she was but a child; and that ever since she had lived under the sole care of Miss Greene, a lady verging upon fifty, remarkably agreeable, and in no way answering to the generally-received notions of domestic she-dragons. I further found that Mr. Canham's peculiar ideas were not confined to art; they were the same upon all questions of tuition; and Miss Greene soon told me that his bad and peculiar temper made all argument with him fatal; that he must be allowed to dictate and appear to have his own way.

I followed this advice; and when the family left town I received a polite note from the father, enclosing a cheque for my services and thanking me for the

improvement I had effected in Miss Canham's handling of the brush. A time, he said, would be settled when I should pay them a visit in the country, to carry on the lessons out of doors, as proposed.

I, however, heard nothing of them for three years, though I had often pondered over the curious antagonism existing between father and daughter. His influence was in all ways prejudicial to her. Her whole vitality seemed depressed by his presence. He was in the habit, at least once during every lesson, of making his appearance in the drawing-room, and laying down the law and expounding his opinions. There was a pomposity in his manner and an *ex-cathedra* tone in all he said that were irritating beyond measure. He was quite incapable of entering into the feelings or ideas of anybody else. His conceit and selfishness had dried up every sympathy, and it was problematical as to whether he had any heart at all.

On the other hand, his daughter, although high-spirited, was a girl of the keenest sensibility—what the doctors would call 'a bundle of nerves' from head to foot—and it was perfectly unintelligible to me how there could be any relationship between them, especially the close one which existed.

His very voice affected her; it made her shrink visibly into a smaller compass; her eyes would assume a hopelessly blank look; nor was it until she was once more left alone with Miss Greene and myself that her light-heartedness and natural buoyancy returned, or that she would again expand—either morally or physi-

cally—as certain flowers shut and open their petals under the influence of cloud or sunshine.

At last, early in December 18—, I received the following letter from Mr. Canham. It bore no address or date, but had a London postmark :

‘Dear Sir,—Various circumstances prevented my arranging for the continuance of your lessons to my daughter as I hoped. Now, however, I should be glad of your further assistance. I think that no better method of studying landscape out of doors can be found than to begin with what one may call “Nature’s skeleton,” when her framework is completely visible. I should wish Miss Canham, therefore, to commence sketching at this season of the year; and, if your arrangements will permit, it will give me great pleasure if you can spend the next month, including your Christmas, with us at a little place I have taken near Pellerton, Northerlandshire, where Miss Greene and my daughter are at present staying alone. Go down as soon as you can and set to work. You are expected.

‘I fear, however, I may not be able to join you until Christmas-eve. I keep a very small establishment at Drearholt Lodge, so you will excuse my not sending a carriage to meet you at Pellerton station; but you will obtain a fly there to convey you to the house.

‘One thing only I have to request: you must on no account let any one know where you are. During the time you are with us manage to have as little corre-

spendence as possible; date your letters as from London, enclose them to Mr. Truston (a factotum of mine), Aston-place, Hornsey, and they will be safely posted; also authorise your servant to give him all your letters when he calls, and I will answer for their reaching you safely. I will make ample compensation for any inconvenience this arrangement may put you to, but absolute secrecy I must insist upon.—Faithfully yours,
‘W. CANHAM.’

Strange conditions these, I thought, but quite like him; only I fancy the young lady will find it cool work painting out of doors this weather. My curiosity was excited. I had no important correspondence of business at this time. I knew this would be a remunerative expedition; and as Christmas had long ceased to be a very marked season with me, and as it mattered little now where I spent it, I determined to go.

In a few days, therefore, I found myself travelling on the Great Northern Railway into Northerlandshire. The rather singular conditions of silence imposed on me impressed me with an idea that my visit might not be wholly without romance or adventure. I felt fully convinced that I should find a decided change in my pupil.

The peculiar want of sympathy and the misunderstanding which I had discovered as existing between her and her father, combined now with this seclusion in a retired and wild part of the country, at what is generally the season for sociability and enjoyment,

pointed to a state of things so thoroughly unusual, that my presentiments seemed at least well founded.

After a journey of nearly ten hours I reached the lonely little station of Pellerton, just as it was getting dark, and secured the solitary fly ; but, to my surprise, I found that I had a twelve miles' drive before me, over a very hilly country. I soon lost all idea of the direction we were taking, and it was very late ere Drearholt was reached. It was a mere box, indeed ; but fires blazed cheerily, and Miss Greene received me cordially. On asking for my pupil, she told me gravely that Miss Canham had not been well of late, and had gone to bed. My presentiments were not hushed by her peculiar manner ; and by degrees, over the supper-table, I elicited the fact that Miss Canham had been kept in this seclusion for the last month, in consequence of a love-affair of which her father did not approve.

‘He just takes,’ said Miss Greene, ‘the same perverse view of this as of all other matters concerning the child. There is not the slightest reason for his objections ; the gentleman is of large fortune, good birth, irreproachable character, and his offer might altogether be looked upon as one of the most eligible description. Mr. Canham, however, will not hear of it, and persists in maintaining that no woman ought to marry until she is thirty, whilst, as you may remember, Miss Canham is but just twenty. She has taken it sadly to heart, and the unfortunate adverse influence which her father's presence always had upon her does not in this instance disappear as it used to do in his

absence. I am very glad you are come, Mr. Manser,' she continued, 'as I hope the interest Mabel takes in your lessons may benefit her health, which has suffered somewhat severely.'

'Probably,' I replied, 'this was Mr. Canham's idea, for it is a somewhat unusual season for ladies to think of sketching from Nature.'

'O dear, no! he never thought of that. Her health or her happiness never enters into his arrangements. He thinks of nothing but her putting in practice the theory, which has just sprung up in his mind, about beginning to draw from the skeleton of Nature. If he had wanted her to learn algebra or Dutch, or some pet plan of his own, he would have had a master down to carry out his views immediately. No,' she continued, with a sigh, 'he thinks of nothing but himself; it is very cruel; and now that Mabel's future is at stake I feel my responsibility becoming more than I can bear. In trivial things it does not matter; but his absolute refusal to look at the question of Mabel's engagement rationally is serious. It signifies very little whether he has her taught this or that accomplishment after his own systems, as he is pleased to call his fancies; but it does signify very much his insisting on his theory of women not marrying until they are thirty being carried out when his daughter's happiness is imperilled. He has no objection to a ten years' engagement, although, as I have said, there is nothing to prevent the marriage taking place at once. Of course, Mr. Hurford objects to waiting so long; and we have been sent here to

prevent the possibility of an elopement, which at one time appeared imminent.'

'But surely,' I remarked, 'Mr. Hurfurd knows where you are?'

'No : I am positive he does not.'

'O, then,' said I, 'this accounts for the silence imposed upon me. But pray tell me, is it not very absurd to suppose that your whereabouts can be long kept secret?'

'No, indeed; not so absurd as you may think; it was very cunningly managed by Mr. Canham. Listen :

'There had been many painful scenes between father and daughter. We were in town, ostensibly on our way to the Continent, where we were to winter, and this intention was made as public as possible in the household. It was uncertain how long we should be away, and all letters for the present were to be directed *Poste Restante*, Genoa. One evening we three left Curzon-street in a cab, unaccompanied by any servants, the butler telling the driver, as he shut the door, to go to Charing-cross terminus. We had scarcely turned into Piccadilly when Mr. Canham put his head out of the window, and ordered the man to drive to the Great Northern station. I was somewhat surprised, but poor Mabel was in far too distressed and absent a state of mind to take any heed of the change, and nothing more was said till we reached King's-cross. There would be an hour to wait, the porter told us, before the limited mail started; but we could get into the

carriage, which had been secured, if we pleased, at once.

‘ When Mabel had entered, Mr. Canham held me back, and, telling the guard to lock the door, took me aside, and then informed me of his scheme. He declared his intention of breaking off all possibility of communication with Mr. Hurford, and leave him without any clue to our destination, except the false one thrown out by the address given to the servants in Curzon-street. He entreated, and, in a way, commanded, me to aid and assist him in furthering his plans, and insisted on my promising to do so. The unexpected proceeding, as well as the suddenness and energy with which he urged my compliance, gave me no time to reflect; indeed, much as I might have objected and still do object to the plan he is adopting, of course I could but acquiesce. Nay, so urgent was he that he made me faithfully promise, and I believe he was going to ask me to swear, to keep his counsel.

‘ We then returned to the carriage, and, having taken our seats, he told Mabel that he had no intention of going abroad, that she was to consider herself bound in honour to hold no communication with Mr. Hurford. “ But,” he continued, “ Miss Greene will see that my wishes are carried out, and that you are kept isolated from all society until you are prepared to forego your wish to marry for the next ten years.”

‘ Her face gave no sign of his words being understood, but her old habit of shrinking from him was more *apparent* than ever. It was a most trying time, and I felt

half culpable as I thus found myself a partner in his cruel and absurd behaviour—turned, as it were, involuntarily into a gaoler over the girl whom I had loved as if she had been my own, and for whose sake alone I had put up with Mr. Canham's perversities and oddities for so many years.

'We arrived at this wild and out-of-the-way place in due time, and afterwards learned that Mr. Canham had hired this cottage, which was but a keeper's lodge in the days when the large but now ruinous house of the estate was inhabited. You will see it to-morrow standing on the hill to the right. We have been here a month; we have no attendants but an infirm couple, Gibson and his wife, left in charge of the lodge, and the little country girl who waits upon us. We are twelve miles from Pellerton, the nearest post-town, whence all our provisions are sent twice a week. Mr. Canham left us a few days after we had been here, but returns on Christmas-eve.'

'Good gracious!' I interposed; 'why, it is like being buried alive! the man must be mad!' for by this time I was fully impressed with the singularity of the situation. 'How do you mean to act? Do you contemplate letting things remain thus?'

'I don't know what to do. I am quite bewildered, for Mabel has become so fitful and wayward that I have fears for her reason. She has ceased bemoaning her fate, and, naturally conceiving that I am siding with her father, withdraws all confidence in me. I strive in vain to cheer her up; she only repels me. I was thinking

of writing to Mr. Canham's brother, when, hearing that you were coming, I thought I would wait and consult with you as to what could be done. You understand the extreme difficulty of my position ; my word has been passed, and if I refuse any longer to consider myself bound I am not sure that Mr. Canham would not give me my *congé*, and possibly place Mabel under the care of an utter stranger. This I could not bear, loving her as I do ;' and here the poor lady's heart failed her, and she burst into tears.

I was fairly nonplussed, and we did not pursue the discussion much further. I slept little that night for thinking over all I had heard, and the strangeness of my position. Yet what business of mine were Mr. Canham's domestic affairs ? I had no plea for interfering. No, I could only do what I had undertaken, and possibly this might in some degree shorten the days for the poor girl, in whom my interest was now increased.

I dressed as soon as it was daylight, and went out into the gray and chill December morning. It was, indeed, a solitary spot ; utterly secluded and shut in by hills, which here and there almost reached the dignity of mountains. The whole aspect of the place was uncanny to a degree, rendered more so by the time of year and the wild drifting clouds, which hung about and swirled round the crests of the bare and rugged promontories. There was but one road, apparently, to the house, and this was soon lost to view by reason of the undulating character of the country. A gloomy, ruinous, deserted,

mansion-like building stood as Miss Greene had described, and one could imagine that the whole property and district were under some sort of ban ; for although the cottage was snug enough inside, externally it wore a very woe-begone and dilapidated appearance.

When, at breakfast, I met Miss Canham, I was really startled at her appearance. Miss Greene's story had prepared me in some measure, but not fully, for what I saw. Her figure had rounded but little since we met, though her face had grown older. A ghost only of a smile sprang up as we shook hands, and it was with great difficulty that I could in any way interest her in the work before us. Later in the day, when we strolled out with a view to settling on some picturesque subject, a slight spark of her former enthusiasm (for she had always been fond of art, and possessed no mean capacity for drawing) revived.

The weather brightened somewhat. I felt less depressed as the sun shone out, and it was now, although within a fortnight of Christmas-day, by no means cold. Sketching out of doors, well wrapped up, would be agreeable enough ; and after some consultation we fixed upon a point in the peculiar but not unpicturesque neighbourhood suitable for our purpose. Four or five days passed more pleasantly than might have been expected ; we progressed with our study satisfactorily ; the spirits of both of my companions rose—the younger even at times evincing delight over her sketch. I frequently renewed my conversation with Miss Greene, and heard many little family details that showed and

explained several points that were at first rather obscure, but which are not essential to my narrative.

One afternoon, when we had finished drawing at a considerable distance from the cottage, the ladies went towards home, whilst I lingered—as we painters are apt to do when we see fresh capabilities in scenery; for I thought from a certain point a good composition might be had of a new subject. I got over a low wall, by the side of the footpath we had been sitting in, and went towards a ruinous-looking barn at the end of an adjoining field. As I approached it I found that it was part of some old monastic building which had been converted to farm purposes. It was so high that it must, in its former state, have consisted of more than one story. The ordinary barn-like gates were on the side by which I reached it, and were the only visible means of ingress.

It occurred to me that one could sit inside, and by looking back get a capital view of the subject I was contemplating. This would be particularly desirable, for there was a threatening of colder weather, and I did not want to let Miss Canham's interest slacken in her outdoor painting. But when I tried to open the doors I discovered they were fastened from within; so I made my way with difficulty through a hedge round to the other side, which abutted on a by-lane, and which I had not observed until I thus came suddenly upon it.

High above on this side there were three old arched windows, two of which had been bricked up; the third had a wooden door, standing partly open, which could be reached by a tall ladder or movable flight of old

wooden steps resting against the wall. Up these I went, and discovered that this end of the upper part of the building was a loft, another door out of which led to a second flight of steps, down on to the threshing-floor of the barn itself. I descended ; and then, as I expected, from the inside I easily pushed open one of the old gates. Thus I found that this empty and deserted building would make a large and commodious painting-hut, with a perfect view of the scene I had fixed upon.

There was not a soul about ; and the unusual solitude of the whole neighbourhood was even more remarkable here, from the desolate aspect of the building and the adjacent cart-sheds and outhouses. I have been thus minute in my description of this place for reasons which will soon appear.


Returning to the by-lane I took my bearings, concluding that there would be no difficulty in reaching Drearholt that way ; for, although closely shut in by the leafless trees, I could still see that it went parallel with the line of hills with which I was familiar. A sharp turn in the road brought it to the margin of a brawling trout-stream, which ran through the valley. Some way down I could see a man, who, but for the time of year, might have been fishing ; but he was too far off for me to distinguish very clearly either what he was like or what he was doing, and I should not have noticed him at all but for the rarity of the human species in these parts ; for days would pass without our seeing any one in this district—the most thinly-populated I ever was in. The lane eventually fell into the main-

road, leading from Drearholt to Pellerton station, but at a greater distance from the former than I expected.

On reaching home I propounded my scheme of sitting in the barn, which was hailed with acclamation. Now although, as I have hinted, Miss Canham had revived considerably since my arrival, she had not displayed anything like the marked improvement of spirits noticeable on this particular evening; and but for a certain excitement and anxiety in her manner, one would have said she was nearly her old self again; and during dinner Miss Greene and I exchanged glances of satisfaction. Later, when she had retired for the night, this condition was naturally the chief topic of my usual *tête-à-tête* with the kind-hearted duenna.

‘It is too sudden,’ I said, ‘to be quite satisfactory. When you left me in the valley there was no evidence of these high spirits. When did they come on?’

‘Well, just before dinner. We had been to our room, and Mabel was a longer time than usual dressing. I came down alone. When she followed I saw she was rather excited, and was surprised at her extreme access of gaiety. I can’t quite account for it, because she has hardly been out of my sight. You know we occupy the same room, as Mr. Canham requested; and, indeed, I promised him never to leave her alone more than I could help. If such a thing were possible, I should think she had received some news. Yet this cannot be, for she has no letters; and even the few I have are forwarded from Genoa, this being part of the plan so carefully laid for our isolation. Moreover, what corre-



spondence there is passes through my hands, as I keep the key of the letter-bag, which is brought and carried away by a walking postman.'

A little more to the same effect brought us to bed-time, and we bade each other good-night.

Next day and the two following we made consecutive pilgrimages to the barn, which, by the way, was further off than we had at first supposed; but we took our luncheon with us, and usually spent many hours there, seldom returning till it began to grow dusk. The sketch was highly satisfactory; but it still wanted two good days' work.

Meanwhile Miss Canham's enthusiasm and improved spirits continued unabated; but Miss Greene complained bitterly of the cold, and tried to persuade her to finish her drawing at home. But the young lady was very self-willed, and I was loth to check the interest she took in her pursuit; so she carried her point, although, but for the friendly shelter of the barn, the coldness of the weather, albeit bright and fine, would have prevented her doing so.

We had now reached the 23d of December; and going home by the footpath that afternoon, as I frequently did, alone, I again remarked a man walking along the lane on which the barn abutted, whom I somehow fancied was the person I had seen on the banks of the stream; but I was this time also too far off to be sure, and only noticed the fact from the same reason as on the former occasion.

That night a change crept over us. The weather

became intensely cold ; a sharp frost powdered the country with a film of white ; and on the morning of the 24th, as we walked off for the last time to our little encampment, there was a slight fall of snow. It became a question of turning back, but Miss Canham positively refused. She said she had taken so much pains with her sketch that she was determined to finish it from Nature, and that it would not be at all unpleasant in the barn ; moreover insisting that it would be great fun having a picnic in the snow.

But about an hour after we had settled ourselves things began to look rather serious. The cold was frightful ; the wind blew straight in at the open door, and the snow fell at intervals in enormous flakes. Nevertheless, our enthusiast took no heed of it, but diligently worked away, though, as I told her, the effect was so changed that all she was doing could be better done at home.

No ; she would stay—she was determined. She liked the novelty of the situation—this pursuit of art under difficulties.

By degrees the weather got much worse. We could not see our subject for the now continuous veil of snow falling in front of us. It drifted into the barn, and gathered rapidly and thickly at the foot of the one door that was not open. At last, between two and three o'clock, it became quite hopeless, and I was obliged to close the other side of the two doors. We must prepare to trudge back again, and I began to pack up our materials. The wind howled and rattled through the

loft, banging the wooden window, and giving unmistakable evidence of a furious storm. Still, we could not stay there, and the sooner we got home the better ; yet it seemed ridiculous to attempt to face such weather ; it could not last all the afternoon thus. What should we do ?

There was a great deal of vacillation ; we would wait a while, at least, and while waiting we could not employ our time better, Miss Canham thought, than by having our lunch. So nothing would serve the wayward girl, who seemed bent on doing anything for the sake of delay, but spreading out the whole array of provisions. Her spirits seemed to rise in proportion as ours fell, and she laughed and joked incessantly about our 'elderly' misgivings. Miserably cold and wretched, with what little light that was left gradually decreasing, it was not the gayest scene for a picnic that could be imagined. However, much time was spent over it, in spite of Miss Greene's nervousness and anxiety to get away. At last she cried impetuously,

'Do see how the weather looks, Mr. Manser ; I am determined to start at once. It is the sheerest folly losing time in this manner. We shall barely get home as it is before dusk.'

Quickly obeying her, I ran up the steps to the loft, and looked out upon the road whence I had first entered the place, and was not at all reassured by what I saw. The road itself, owing to the protection of the thick holly hedge, brushwood, and trees which skirted it on this the weather side, was tolerably free from snow ;

but heavy drifts of it were banking up in every exposed place, it still fell more thickly than ever, and the dark leaden sky hung close upon the earth. Really this was no joke ; we must get away at once, or there would be positively a chance of being 'snowed up.'

I knew enough of wind and weather to be aware that no time should be lost. Returning to my companions I stated my opinion, which was received by the younger one with laughter and expressions of delight at the novelty and romance of such a situation. The poor duenna was in despair.

'O, never mind the things,' she said, wrapping her cloak round her; 'they will be quite safe. Come, come, Mabel, immediately!' and she made towards the door. Having at last groped her way to it, she exclaimed, 'Good gracious! I can't open it!'

I directly went to her assistance, and found what she said was true. I put out all my strength to push it open, but it gave way scarcely an inch only at the upper part. The wind and snow whirled through the aperture in a second and nearly blinded me, but I could see a pile of snow reaching three feet up the door.

My fears were realised much more rapidly than I expected. I renewed my efforts again and again to get it open, but with no effect. Little pats of the drift kept falling in through the crack; but as to moving the door materially, that was out of the question. We were 'snowed up.'

I need not dwell on the effect this discovery produced on the elder of my companions. I calmed her anxiety

somewhat by explaining that our retreat was at all events open by way of the loft and ladder leading into the lane, and that it would not be very difficult for her to get down, and doubtless Gibson would find some means of looking after us.

‘I feel sure the roads will be quite passable,’ I said; ‘it is only here and there that there is anything like drift at present. These doors stand exposed to the full fury of the wind, at the end of a hollow; and, if I had given it a moment’s thought, I should have guessed what might happen.’

At the same time I had no idea so much snow had fallen. As to Miss Canham, she made me rather angry by the selfishness with which she disregarded her poor friend’s feelings. She continued to laugh, saying that she had not been so amused for years: we should certainly have to spend the night there; but it did not matter; it would be very jolly; we had got plenty of rugs and shawls, and plenty to eat and drink; and even at that moment she was regaling herself with a large sandwich and a glass of sherry. Nevertheless, there was an assumed indifference about her not quite natural.

I imagine it was about four o’clock, just as I was going to assist Miss Greene up the ladder into the loft, when Miss Canham darted forward, laid her hand on my arm, and said,

‘Hush! what is that rumbling noise? Surely there is something coming along the road;’ and, pushing me aside from the steps, she ran up to the top,

there exclaiming, in a sort of mock-heroic tone, 'O, yes! We are saved! we are saved!'

I followed her immediately, and to my relief saw a fly in the act of pulling up just under the window.

'All right,' I cried to the driver; 'you have come for us, I suppose; we shall be down in a minute.'

'Yes,' growled the man, 'I be come for the lady.'

I was about to turn away, when Miss Canham sprang past me, as if determined to descend at once.

'Wait a moment! wait a moment!' I cried. 'For Heaven's sake, don't be in such a hurry! You had better let Miss Greene go first.'

'No, no!' she replied, with her foot on the top step. 'I'll help her down. Go and fetch her.'

I lingered for a moment in real anxiety, as I saw this now wildly-excited young lady persist in scrambling down the wooden flight of steps, always a dangerous and ticklish operation, especially for a woman, but rendered doubly so now from their slippery condition, to say nothing of their not being fastened, but merely resting against the wall. She got half-way down, when, stopping and looking up at me, she said,

'Don't be afraid. Go and fetch Miss Greene. I'll wait and help her.'

'Very well,' I replied. 'Be careful; stand steady.' And away I went, calling to Miss Greene, 'Now pray come; it is all right. Here is a fly, and your young friend is half-way down the steps;' and as I was helping the trembling lady into the loft I heard the coach-door slam, and a man's voice (not the driver's) say,

'Now, then, as fast as you can!' These words were immediately followed by the muffled sound of the carriage driving away.

A sudden idea that we had both been fairly duped rushed into my mind. I hurried up to the window, and, to my amazement and consternation, there were no steps! They were thrown down, and lay half sunk in the snow, just under the window. There was no young lady; and all I could see was the carriage driving off rapidly along the road, a sharp turn in which the next moment hid it from my sight.

No words can describe my companion's agonised state of mind. I, too, felt anything but comfortable. It was quite clear that this was some preconcerted plan of elopement, to which our sketching arrangements, combined with the weather, had lent considerable assistance. The recent high spirits, the anxiety to come to the barn, the persistency with which she insisted on remaining, her assumed determination to finish her sketch, and the various little inexplicable proceedings to which Miss Canham had resorted for the sake of delay, were now all fully accounted for. Doubtless some means of communication had been opened by Mr. Hurford, and, as I thought of it, it occurred to me as not improbable that he was the stranger who had twice come under my notice within the last few days.

Of course, if this was so, he would easily have found means to give intimation of his plans; and the imminent arrival of Mr. Canham, who, it will be remembered,

was expected this very evening, had doubtless precipitated his proceedings; though whether Mr. Hurford was actually in the fly as it drove away we could not be sure; yet the strange voice that I had heard and the removal of the ladder were items of additional presumptive evidence that he was.

For some minutes we thought of nothing but these things, but very soon our own forlorn position forced itself upon us. Here were we, nearly two miles from home, shut up, complete prisoners in a dreary out-of-the-way building, with we knew not what prospect of release. Night was coming on, the fury of the storm by no means abating. Every moment increased our difficulty, and, as by degrees we weighed every detail, our condition looked more and more hopeless. Gibson and his wife had been, of course, expecting us every hour; they could not know exactly where we were; and even if they did, the increasing depth of snow over the roads, the scanty population, and absolute dearth of vehicles would all combine to prevent anything like speedy aid reaching us.

I foresaw clearly that, unless I could manage to get out, we should have to pass the night there.

The idea of jumping from the window, which at first occurred to me, upon consideration was impossible—the thickness of the snow which, on the other side of the barn, blocked us in would have been invaluable beneath the window as a break to my fall; but, as I have said, the road, from being protected, was but scantily covered, and a leap from such a height would,

in all probability, have been attended with broken bones.

Thus the elements not only combined against us, but aided and abetted the escape of our young traitress. The next thought I had was of a rope by which to lower myself; but, besides the darkness in which we were enveloped, and consequent impossibility of searching, I felt pretty sure from previous observation that there was no such thing to be found, as the barn was all but denuded of the usual odds and ends stowed away in such places.

I set to work and hallooed with all my might, but my voice could not travel a dozen yards for the roaring and moaning of the wind through the neighbouring trees. Then again despairingly I made impotent efforts to force the barn-door; but, of course, in vain. No; beyond a doubt our Christmas-eve (for suddenly we recollected the date) would be passed in this desolate and miserable place, and our sumptuous fare for Christmas-day would probably consist of the scanty remnants of our lunch.

Although I do smoke I am not a slave to the habit, and therefore have no difficulty in relinquishing it occasionally. I had not smoked since I had been at Drearholt. So I had no pipe or tobacco with me—even my matchbox. A thousand petty difficulties after this fashion crowded through my mind, and even occupied me for a time more than the serious prospects of being frozen, or even starved, to death. By degrees Miss Greene began to show a little fortitude; we were

obliged to look our position straight in the face, and regard it as philosophically as we could. We consulted, and settled that nothing could be done—at any rate, till daylight.

Cautiously I groped about, and got hold of our rugs and wraps, of which there was fortunately an abundance, and made up, in the snuggest corners I could find, two apologies for resting-places. And here literally, on this bitter eve of Christmas, in this dilapidated shelter, with the winds whistling through our roof, snowed up, helpless, with no prospect of relief, very little to eat and drink, and in total darkness, did we two pass the night!

I will not dwell on the bodily discomfort and mental anxiety of that long, long, dreary time; it can scarcely be imagined, certainly not described. Once or twice I did fall asleep, but only to wake so benumbed that I at last dreaded giving way to drowsiness. Feeling the necessity, too, of keeping my poor companion awake, I continually endeavoured to chat with her, as cheerfully as I could. However, 'time and the hour run through the longest day'—and night. With the dawn the wind dropped. An hour afterwards a cloudless sky, and a still, steady, hard, cold, a thoroughly seasonable Christmas morning, was the report of the weather I made from my look-out.

Again and again I hallooed till I was hoarse; the clear air seemed but to mock my impotent efforts to make myself heard. Again and again I hurled myself despairingly against the doors; they yielded less than

ever! Again and again I sought to loosen their planking; they defied me! Again and again I tried to pick a way through the wall; it was far too substantial! Still, I could not make up my mind to jump, for if I disabled myself then both our fates were inevitably sealed, and a drop of twenty feet or more on to hard-frozen ground would possibly result in such a catastrophe.

For six mortal hours after this, in perfect solitude, and with the most extraordinary silence reigning around, did we two forlorn half-starved wretches wait and wait in helpless inaction.

Were we to spend yet another night like the last? The possibility was too horrible to think of. My companion was half stupefied, and the remains of our provisions, although I had husbanded them as well as I could, were fast running short. Evening was gradually creeping on, and, I confess, bringing utter despair now to me. We were like rats in a pit, and there seemed no hope.

Would *no* effort be made from the house to seek us?

Yes! What is that? The same muffled rumble on the road that we had heard about four-and-twenty hours ago.

I looked out, and once again, sure enough, there was the fly—the same identical pair-horsed fly, driver and all, just in the act of stopping, as I had seen him the day before!

‘For God’s sake put up the ladder!’ I half shrieked to the man, who irritated me beyond measure by not instantly springing from his box.

‘Noa, noa! not yet a while,’ said the rascal slowly, smiling benignly up at me, but never moving an inch.

‘What do you mean?’ I again shrieked. ‘Why, we are nearly starved to death. Get down immediately and put up the ladder.’

‘Noa, noa!’ he repeated; ‘not so fast, not so fast; not till ye ha’ promised to keep quiet and to say naught about it for the next two days. If you won’t promise this I’ll just drive away again, and e’en leave somebody else to dig ye out!’

I saw what he meant in a moment, and saw he was in earnest; for he added, moving his horses on a yard or two, ‘Now, then, will ye make up your mind? for I canna wait.’

I need hardly say that we did make up our minds, and in a quarter of an hour afterwards were being slowly driven along the narrow lane, which, though thickly covered with snow, was still quite passable. Two hundred yards short of the spot where it fell into the main road we stopped.

‘Ye’ll please to get out here; ye’ll be able to find your way now before it is quite dark,’ was our driver’s remark, as he opened the door. ‘I canna trust to take ye farther. I ha’ got my orders, and ha’ been well paid for the whole job; but you may give me a Christmas-box, if you like, for all that.’ And this I actually did; for, once released, I was only sensible of the ludicrous and comical side of this well-managed plot.

Little more need be told. This is the way I passed my Christmas in 18—. The difficulties that followed,

and poor Miss Greene's sufferings, both mental and bodily, which were really very serious, may be easily imagined. Her occupation in the Canham family was gone—gone and got married; but she still flourishes, and I have had the pleasure of giving many lessons to her present pupils.

Privately, I may state that in my opinion the stern parent was rightly served, although it was rather hard that we should have been so painfully made the instruments of his punishment.

He did not reach Drearholt for three days after his daughter's elopement, having been also 'snowed up' at the further end of the country, where the railway line had been completely blocked.

I broke the news to him. It was an unpleasant but curious scene. I wish I had time to describe it. At present he has forgiven none of us. I have heard once from Mrs. Hurfurd, who is still abroad. She gave me a full account of how everything was managed; but told me very little that I or anybody could not have guessed from the way things fell out.

THE ROAR OF LONDON.

STREET cries!—the hubbub of London thoroughfares! Who can analyse, dissect, and bring to the surface the thousand component parts of this great Babylonian din? The hum of the big city, as heard from the quiet retreat of the surrounding suburbs, is seldom hushed, and it forms a curiously speculative matter for thought, when listening to the distant roar from some such locality: of what is it composed? what millions of ingredients go to make and keep it up! To separate and describe all these would be no mean task, and one that could be only undertaken by an old inhabitant and keen observer, whose ears and nerves were highly trained and sufficiently strong, yet sensitive enough to appreciate the several distinctions without being driven into a lunatic asylum by the distracting character of his task. A few of these noises come rattling into my mind as I think about it, each clearly and separately distinct one from the other, and forming a portion only of that conglomeration of sound poetically known as the murmur arising from the busy haunts of men.

Now I live in a noisy street—a very noisy street; but at the time I first took up my residence here, being young, vigorous, and in a robust state of health, I was

not aware of the fact. A cockney bred and born, noise was part of the atmosphere in which I lived and breathed; if I ever thought at all about it, it was only to revel and delight in it. The rattle of the great thoroughfares stimulated and exhilarated me; it used to make me sing from pure delight. I whistled like a bird as I jostled through the crowd; sunshine, clouds, rain, mud, snow, or wind were comparatively as nothing to me, so long as there was plenty of traffic, and the mercury of my constitution rose and fell as the throng grew more or less dense. It was the warmth which gave life and vitality to my being, and acted, I suspect, very much upon me as the genial influence of spring weather does upon the blackbird or thrush. I always came down from my chambers pluming myself, as it were, under the exciting influence of noise and bustle; the mere sense of living in it was a pleasure, a pleasure of which I was almost unconscious; just as a man enjoys the free use of his limbs, of his lungs, or any of his senses, without being aware of their existence. The doctors tell you that you should never know that you have got a heart, or liver, or joints, or muscles; that you should be quite innocent of possessing any such functions, and that a sure sign of something being wrong in the organisation is indicated by the knowledge that you *have* a foot, an ankle, a finger, or a hand. Directly you become aware that there is a pain in your knee, at that moment you are reminded of what you before accepted as a matter of course, without thinking about it. You become conscious of the fact that you have a knee-joint,

and that in moving in a certain direction suffering is produced ; consequently you set to work *not* to move it in that direction which gives you pain. This effort naturally leads you to remember that you *have* a knee, and you are perpetually, of course, being reminded of it.

It was in this way only that I was ever forcibly convinced that noise was essential to my comfort. Turning suddenly from the bustle of Holborn into the quiet of Gray's-inn, or from Fleet-street into the tranquil purlieus of the Temple, I felt immediately depressed. Down went my mercury. I was made conscious of a want ; it gave me pain to turn in this direction, and, just as with a sprained ankle, I avoided as much as possible putting myself in the position which was uncomfortable. Sometimes, when in an unguarded moment I found myself betrayed into accepting the hospitality of a ruralising friend from Saturday till Monday, the quiet of the country house counteracted at once the enjoyment which my naturally convivial disposition would otherwise have found in the social contact and companionship to be met with there. There might be no monotony, no dulness, plenty to do and to talk about, yet the absence of the busy hum of the city was always irksome to me. It was something like what one can imagine would be the sensation of drinking fine claret out of a tea-cup in a wine-cellar without a light.

But it was at night that the true misery of my position became fully open to me ; the blank unbroken stillness of my bedroom overlooking the park at once drove away all possibility of sleep. In the chatter and

gossip of the *tabagie* I had forgotten for a while the twisted ankle of my mind—it was in an easy position and free from pain ; but once turned into that tranquil chamber where the downy couch awaited me, I received a wrench which brought me back at once to the full consciousness that I was deprived of one of the great necessities of my life. At home, in my noisy street, I no sooner put my head on the pillow than brother Morpheus embraced me, he wrapped his arms around me with a completeness and a rapidity that even the great epicure in sleep, Sancho Panza himself, might have envied.

My street was never really quiet. The whole twenty-four hours went round, and it would have been scarcely possible to have found a clear five minutes without the passage of some vehicle to and fro. Truly in this great Babylon of ours there is a short period when the busiest thoroughfares are under the influence of a lull—from three to four o'clock A.M. in summer, and from two till five in winter ; but it is only a lull, it is never silence. Thus I was always rocked to repose by what, it was pretty evident, was one of my necessities. Such is the force of habit, that what sent me to sleep in London would keep a countryman broad awake, and *vice versa*. The moaning or blustering of the wind as it swelled through the stately elms in the park, the occasional cawing of the rooks, the bleating of sheep, the lowing of cattle, and the various other mild 'noises' indigenous to rusticity, were such a hollow mockery of the real continuous sound to which I was accustomed,

that they only aggravated my want, rendering the general silence more apparent.

At night by the sea-shore, in the lodging-house bedroom, very much of the same misery awaited me. The proverbially soothing influence of the sluicing of the tide, as it ebbs and flows on the shingle or sand, had, alas, a precisely reverse effect on my perverse and irritable sensibility. If by good luck it blew 'great guns,' and the waves dashed with unmitigated fury on a rocky coast, keeping up an unbroken roar, aided and abetted by the rattle of hail or rain against the windows, my condition was not so bad; there was an affinity in some degree between this and the unbroken tumult of the big Babylon. Possibly my nature was somewhat akin to that of the renowned mariner celebrated in song as 'Barney Bunting,' who, whilst complacently reversing the position of the consolatory morsel of tobacco he was chewing, expatiated to his messmate, William Bowling, on the delights of a residence on ship-board during the prevalence of a strong wind from the north-west, at the same time expressing his deep sympathy for all unfortunate dwellers on dry land under such circumstances. 'Tiles and chimney-pots' might be flying about my head, but so long as there was plenty of noise, I know I could sleep *on shore*; and strong nor'-westers, under the same conditions, I fancy, would have produced the same result *afloat*!

Alas, all this is totally changed now! Noise is no longer the lullaby and stimulant it used to be. On the contrary, it has become the bugbear and *bête noire* of

my existence. A nervous fever is to be thanked for this present sensitiveness to all sound—the proverbial dropping of a pin disturbs me; and so alive have I become to the different degrees and qualities of noises, that I am perpetually speculating on and dissecting every species of sound of which the general shindy in the streets is made up. I have come to know exactly the hours on certain days in the week, and seasons of the year, that I may expect particular noises, and, in bed or at work, involuntarily my mind wanders into this confounded hubbub; I have an inclination to look at my watch and feel impatient if certain street-cries do not happen at their proper time. I strain my ears to listen for the well-known rumble, whistle, or squeal, as I catch its echoes from the remotest streets. What was at one period a large harmonious swelling strain has now become a distinct discord made up of a million opposite and uncongenial noises. I can pick them out one by one, telling you at any moment exactly of what materials the whole roar is composed. But to begin anywhere in particular seems impossible, where there is no quiet to make a start from. Morning is supposed to usher in the commencement of labour,—noise naturally should begin then. Would I could say that it ended as naturally at night!

Let us first take, however, what may be called the ‘stock’ noises of this thoroughfare; that is to say, those which may be expected to happen at any moment during eighteen out of the twenty-four hours, irrespective of seasons, bearing in mind at the same time that

everything is more apparent and longer drawn out in summer than in winter. Out-of-door movement begins earlier and continues later. There are more idle people in the streets, more children at play, more itinerant musicians, and more traffic generally. Open windows enable us to hear this better, and altogether one is closer on the brink of Bedlam during hot weather and long days than at any other time of the year.

There is a mews at right angles with my street ; a *paved* mews, mark that ! Let us commence there, for from *there*, perhaps, the real hubbub starts. The rear of my block of buildings abuts on this mews, and is open consequently to the faintest echoes from its inmost recesses. Lots of Pickford's vans live there ; railway carts, cabs, and springless vehicles of every description abide in that hateful place. There is not stabling for all the horses that these abominations require ; therefore at early dawn, often before it, you hear the animals clattering towards their work. The marked heavy tread of the cart-horse, so slowly monotonous that sometimes you perversely think he is galloping, begins it. No, not quite. The Cochin-China cock is the real culprit, for if he be disturbed in his rest he blinkingly imagines the nearest lamp-light to be the dawn of day, trying, it would seem, to stimulate other cocks, his enemies, in the neighbourhood to the same morbid hallucination ; failing which, he is silent for a while, only to redouble his efforts on the next occasion. When morning has positively broken he is apparently calmer ; it is as if he had been afraid of over-sleeping himself, and forget-

ting to call the boy who snores in his hay-loft to go and fetch the horses. With daylight his responsibility seems to end ; so I incline, from experience, to believe that it is a mere myth which bestows on Chanticleer the office of ' black stick in waiting ' to Aurora.

The horse, noble animal, breaks into a spasmodic trot as he turns up the mews ; the boy his rider yells at him ; the dog, his friend that goes with him, barks at him ; the carter who waits for him swears at him ; the noises accumulate as he is harnessed. Paraphrasing the nursery rhyme of my youth, I, instead of sleeping, make idiotic verses, and droning in my ears I hear that

‘ Each boy has a cart,
Each cart has a horse,
Each horse has a dog.
Dogs, horses, carts, and boys
All combine to make up noise ! ’

The dog—noble animal number two—barks the louder as the start becomes more imminent ; on the first movement of the vehicle he is frantic, and as it clatters, gradually increasing in speed, down the mews, he seems to choke himself ; the bark becomes a gasping shriek, jerked out in an undulating movement as he bounds up at the horse's nose, narrowly escaping death by trampling at each jump.

The wagon, cart, dray, van, whatever it is, at present is empty ; everything is loose about it, chains, pins, awning, springs ; the wheels, too, generally want oiling. If the tail-board happens not to be fastened

(and this is usually the case), it bangs delightfully every instant on its hinges. The chain clanks against the wheel or trails behind upon the pavement. Often there is a noise the true origin of which I have never arrived at, but which in my highly-wrought imagination I conceive to be the product of large thick glass jars, containing loose cylindrical bullets, rolled up and down the floor of the vehicle, crashing at each end, and jolting incessantly from side to side. It must be something of this kind; hours and days have been spent in coming to this conclusion, but no other concatenation of atoms could bring about such a diabolical *tintamarre*. This vehicle, or one of its fellows—this car of Juggernaut to my tranquillity of mind—once on the move, appears to perambulate my street at intervals of from five minutes to a quarter of an hour all day up to twelve o'clock at night. It is a sort of running, I might say galloping, accompaniment to the rest of the confusion, which has worse than confounded me. It demands this close analysis, for whatever other sounds happen throughout the day, they are but minglings with the row from this eternal cart. Its only variation is caused by its being occasionally heavily laden, when, though it rattles less, it rumbles more, and, like thunder, shakes the house to its foundations. One terrible form it frequently assumes is that of the brewer's dray (for 'Deux & Co.'s Entire' is round the corner, quite handy). Starting laden with full barrels, it returns at short intervals at a graceful trot with empty ones, whilst the drayman, *seated on the shafts*, vigorously cracks his whip. The

variety caused by this going to and fro is most delightful, especially if stones are newly laid down for road-mending.

Another advantage attributable to the neighbourhood of the brewery is the progress of the grain-cart, which may be classified with, and likened unto, the water-cart—a no mean contributor to the rumbling, as distinguished from the jingling and clattering class of vehicular sounds. Some there are which at once combine the rumble, the jingle, and the clatter. The three-horsed saloon omnibus is an admirable instance of this, with its loud-sounding spring-bell at every start and stoppage. The domestic four-wheeled cab elegantly and in a milder degree likewise combines these advantages. In the two latter instances the sounds are blended, and pretty equally mingled ; but when we come to the hansoms of the period, although we have an equal quantity of rumble, jingle, and clatter as is to be found in the 'bus and the 'growler,' they are continuously successive. First, the rumble from the large wheels ; secondly, the jingle from the trace-chains which the movement of the horse produces by jerks ; thirdly, the clatter of the door-flaps. These succeed each other very regularly, and the cockney ear would be able to distinguish easily the nature of the conveyance which had turned into the furthest end of the street. The light spring-cart of the butcher, baker, or candlestick-maker ; that hybrid vehicle in vogue with town travellers, which is a sort of cross between a mail phaeton, a wagonette, a parcels-delivery van, and a hearse,—

have one and all their characteristic rattles and rumbles. The jinglers have recently received a wonderful additional interest in the custom that has obtained of decorating horses with bells. This French fashion of unnecessarily increasing the uproar of a city has rendered the harmless and comparatively noiseless private equipage a very important competitor of the lumbering wagon. The advantage of india-rubber wheel-tires has been quite negatived by this charming piece of musical ingenuity of our neighbour the Gaul.

All horses come under the category of *clatterers*; indeed this class of sound is mainly derived from them, and multitudinous are the varieties which they offer to the distracted and sensitive ear of your now tortured cockney. From the cart-horse before mentioned to the sprightly little pony of the suburban gig, they are *all* clatterers, varying in tone as they grow large and small, or travel fast or slow over macadam or pavement. More torture is obtained from sounds which I will call the 'shriekers,' the 'whistlers,' the 'groaners,' and the 'hammerers;' qualities which may be found in small quantities in nearly every conveyance, but which are chiefly represented by the human adjuncts to the hurly-burly; for under this head are combined street-cries, all noises from street-boys, everything in the shape of street-music and street and house repairs. My matutinal organ of Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, with 'Slap, bang!' and the reiterated truth that 'Here we are again!' 'Early in the morning,' 'Paddle your

own canoe,' is but a little preceded by the occasional 'sweeps' and perpetual 'milk.'

At a warehouse directly opposite, by six or seven A.M., is commenced an unpacking of heavy packages on the pavement. Deposited by railway vans, and containing as they do pianos, furniture, patent stoves, and suchlike, they require a great deal of hammering, wrenching, and banging ere their outer shell is cracked.

By eight o'clock the din becomes pretty continuous. The next marked feature of it, four times a week all the year round, proceeds from an unfortunate man, whose vocation it is to mend cane and rush bottomed chairs. He is only half a man, however, having no legs, but with a voice which frequently lifts me out of bed; and if it has anything like the same effect upon his progress through life, he must feel very little inconvenience from his unhappy curtailment, and an immense consciousness of the compensatory machinery of beneficent Nature. The voice is more awful than anything I ever heard in the shape of a voice; louder, harsher, more resonant than can be conceived. Such a one belonging to a commanding officer would be simply invaluable, and easily heard above the din of the mightiest combat. Inconceivably powerful, and at the same time inarticulate, it is positively demoniacal.

'C—h—ii—e—ee—rrr—ss to—oo m—ie—n—d!'

There! behold! this is the most that spelling can do to describe this hideous howl. The wretch is accompanied by two sucking chair-menders, his son and daughter

probably; they follow—well, one cannot say their father's footsteps, but in his wake, and produce the same sound, only in a higher and feebler key. Should they ever reach maturity, one trembles to think of the result of such a duet!

Another stock morning noise is the tom-tom of the Hindoo, accompanying his discordant droning song. Saturday is *his* day, but he never misses it; he *never* takes a holiday! Far from it; he not unfrequently gives an extra day, and turns up on Wednesdays as well. Old clothes fetch so little nowadays, that it is a lasting puzzle how it can be worth the Hebraic while to spend so much time offering to buy 'Clo', clo'. But every morning, sure enough, we hear the cry.

The costermonger, or costermongers, with the vegetables and fruit of the season, are not clear of the street till past noon; and if it be summer, much additional bawling is induced from the fact of stocks being 'four pots a shilling,' peas 'eightpence a peck,' or 'beau-pots' two bunches a penny. Rhubarb comes in with ornaments for the fire-stove, and only disappears to make way for cherries and currants. The vendor of the succulent strawberry must be familiar to us all. The hollow droning tone in which he announces the morning-gathered hautboy cannot be forgotten—gathered probably a week ago on the other side of the Channel, and just produced from beneath his truckle-bed in St. Giles's! Still, 'Or—yorr—strawberry,' or 'Ripe oo—booy,' has a summery country sound, and an aggravating, to the imprisoned Londoner. Sunday morning,

however, is his great time, when he has but to contend with the sale of *Ll—l—o—o—y—d's Weekly's* paper, and other numerous but isolated indications of the success that has attended the Association for the Suppression of Sunday Trading. From primroses, watercresses, and wall-flowers in early spring to the 'Fine blooming lavender,' that last cry of summer; from 'Walnuts to pickle' to 'Walnuts a shilling a hundred,' the costermonger is always to the fore for a good nine months out of the twelve.

Itinerant music—no mean feature in the day's din—is too numerous, varied, and well known to need more than mention. With it may be classed the muffin-bell, all the broken-down workmen, cotton-spinners with models of their looms, sham sailors with ships on their heads and sham wooden legs, squalling songstresses, dreadful drabs, or impertinent organ-girls with tambourine and immoral songs, and a thousand other elements of noise which whirl through my head, until Reason seems to totter on her throne. Fortuitous, extraneous, and irregular additions to the hubbub are to be met with at all seasons, early and late. For instance, a chorus of frozen-out gardeners, and the heavy thundering single knock, followed by the 'Clean your door, marm?' which leads inevitably to that most of all teeth-on-edge-setting sounds of a spade used the reverse way to scrape hardened snow from off a street pavement.

The departure of charity children on a summer's expedition in vans is a fine 'accidental,' as a musician

might call it; as is the trowel-chinking on the bricks (five o'clock A.M.) when your next-door neighbour is having a new story added to his house.

When streets are pulled up and traffic stopped, the lull of noises is compensated for by the language you may overhear from the 'British workman,' and the solemn 'Ugh!' which he thinks it necessary to utter as he rams home the newly-arranged paving-stones.

Add to all these instances, and many more impossible to mention, the circumstance that at one end of my street there is a fire-engine station, and at the other a police-court, and the meanest capacity may picture to itself how many supernumerary noises are provoked and got up by these necessary institutions. How each charge that is brought to the latter has its advanced guard of street-boys, whistling, whooping, and yelling with delight as they rush on to take up the best positions afforded by the neighbouring lamp-posts, area-railings, and door-steps, to see the pickpocket or drunken drab consigned to durance vile. How, when the main body itself arrives, surrounded by ragged ragamuffins of a larger growth, hooting and cursing devilishly, the culprit, rampantly or imbecilely drunk, is hurried staggeringly along between the police, or carried by them strapped down on a hospital stretcher. Night-charges, though divested of the surrounding of small boys, are nevertheless beautiful examples of lingering noises, produced by the consultations held at the street-corners by the friends of the accused long after he is locked up. The prison-van, and the crowd

round about the station-house door during the magisterial sitting, must not be forgotten while we are setting down some of our troubles.

The fire-engine is an important item in the production of noise. Too often it is turned out from sheer necessity, but I believe *as* often for keeping up the training and efficiency of the brigade. Otherwise, after the inevitable confusion consequent upon a start for a fire has subsided, more than ten minutes surely would elapse ere the whole row was repeated by the 'return;' nor can I possibly believe that a fire happens every other Sunday morning at least, soon after nine o'clock. Who does not know the peculiar noise and excitement produced by this apparatus—doubled as it is nowadays by the supplement, or van, which carries the firemen after the engine? And who amongst us is not able to recollect a thousand incidental ingredients to street sounds that I have not set down?

Hubbub, row, shindy, clatter, rumble, jingle, hammer, bang, clash, howl, squeak, screech, yell, rattle, whistle, gurgle, rush, hullabaloo, call it what you like, this deafening cacophony is a thing to study, mark, and think of; for it is but the result to the ear of that ceaseless inward motive power which is for ever, whether by honesty or dishonesty, by fair means or foul, by shuffle or straightforwardness, by chicanery or knowledge, impelling man forward on that inevitable path we all tread in obedience to Nature's great law that 'to live is to labour.'

PAINTING AND PUFFING.

‘MR. LEHMANN YELL requests the honour of a visit from Septimus Tunnmarsh, Esq., and friends, to view his pictures for the Royal Academy, on Monday or Tuesday, April 6th and 7th, from one to six o’clock.

‘150 Glenroy-square.’

Some three hundred cards, only varied from the above by the several names of the invited, are annually circulated by this great painter amongst the art-loving community who participate in the pleasure of his acquaintance.

Imprimis, they are sent to the critics—they are very properly always the people first considered; then to the buyers, although many of them have been privileged possibly with certain private ‘private’ views during the progress of the gems of genius about to be offered for exhibition to a somewhat indifferent and ungrateful public; then come the nobility, the lords and ladies who deign to acknowledge Mr. Yell as ‘a person’ of some ability; then the celebrities—authors, actors, poets, and the painter’s own immediate colleagues in the profession; and, finally, the rank and file of the *dilettanti* and the hangers-on, the camp-followers, as it were, to the vast army of art.

The abode of Lehmann Yell, Esq., is a portentous-looking mansion, dingy as to its paint and windows, but vast and imposing as to its structure—well situated in a district at one period (when Bayswater, Kensington, and St. John's Wood were open country) the centre or head-quarters of the artistic community. Lehmann Yell himself, being essentially of the old school, disdains the notion of abandoning this sacred and classic ground for the blandishments of stuccoed suburban villas, with their damp-walled, semi-detached studios. Not that this magnificent residence in Glenroy-square descended to him as its heir—far from it; for, as a grubby little unkempt lad, in his Academy-student days, he doubtless emerged to his work in Trafalgar-square from a far more dingy, and maybe less prosperous, neighbourhood than the region of Glenroy.

Later on, however, when he had developed into a struggling, hard-working artist, he lived and painted his way in a top-room in Chipstone-street, a slummy purlieu of the aforesaid classic ground itself, and there acquired a love and reverence for the quarter which all his subsequent prosperity has never eradicated. The happiness of that time has never been forgotten; mixed with much bitterness, privation, and self-denial, it still stands forth as a cherished memory.

Thirty years ago he did not send cards of invitation to the titled and mighty of the land; he did not prepare a sumptuous cold collation as part of the picture-showing entertainment, by way of putting the critics and the rest into a good-humour, and as a further means of

advertising his own fame. A string of magnificent equipages did not then block up the approaches to his abode on the first Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday in April every year; his humble studio was not then crowded on those days with a continuous stream of gaping visitors, half of them utter strangers to him, who, caring little and knowing less about his pictures—coming chiefly out of idle curiosity to look at his house, and in the hope of catching a glimpse of his pretty wife and lovely children (those children that he has so often painted, and who with their mother have consequently become celebrities)—intrude upon his domesticity as if it was a public show, and for which they had paid their money. Not having a drawing-room then in which to receive a crowd of people, while a certain number were being passed through his painting-room, his photographic albums, his private writing-table, his folios of engravings, his daughters' music, his piano, &c., were not subjected to the minute scrutiny of the multitude. His wife's boudoir and fernery could not then be made a pleasant lounge for an hour or so, until all its details were inspected by a host of inquisitive strangers, who do not perhaps attempt to see the pictures after all ('We couldn't, there was such a crowd, you know; and we had so many other places to see, we had not time!'), but who depart rather offended on finding that Mrs. Yell has not received them; and that poor lady herself, having been kept out of her rooms all day, did not descend in the evening to find her card-basket rummaged, her invitation-

notes turned topsy-turvy, one of her rare Venetian glass vases broken, and several pet ferns and flower-pots in her conservatory capsized by the sweeping trains of her unknown guests. Individuals calling themselves ladies and gentlemen, and moving in what is termed good society, who are supposed to know the ordinary *convenances* of the same, did not presume to pay Mr. Yell visits uninvited, simply on the strength of sending in their card with that of a friend, himself almost unknown at the house, and then commit all sorts of impertinences whilst under its roof, and make empty-headed condemnatory criticisms on the pictures, loud enough for everybody to hear, possibly in the ear of the artist himself, with whose personal appearance they were not even acquainted.

No, none of these things happened in the jolly days of Chipstone-street. These delights were reserved for him when he became famous, and when the ridiculous fashion of the present time in a measure compelled him to go with it, and, by issuing such a card as heads this paper, to lay himself open to all its contingencies. No, no; in former times he had but few visitors; indeed, none but his artist-friends, a jovial jolly crew, who, with some exceptions, strugglers like himself, would meet at his studio of an evening, smoke pipes, and chat and chaff, sing songs, talk shop, and disregard such laws as should prescribe tall hats, tight coats, and close-shaven chins. The art-topics of the day were freely handled, the progress of their own work much discussed, and all the thousand hitches and difficulties

with which they were contending laid before the company. The social bread-and-cheese question—to their credit be it spoken—though not quite ignored (for it sometimes would assert itself), was, however, little touched upon.

In those days they were artists all, pure and simple; money entered but little into their thoughts, painting much. Earnest would be the disputes which arose, now and again, about this or that picture on Yell's easel; and then would be offered the most conflicting advice—advice which, as a novice, he was too prone perhaps to follow. Loving painting for itself, and thinking more of it than of policy, he would be sometimes sorely puzzled by what he heard; for doctors disagree as much about pictures as they do about patients, and Strontian, a most eminent practitioner, whom he would inveigle to his studio as one who knew thoroughly what was the matter with a picture and what would cure it, would entirely contradict the opinion of UMBER, another skilful adviser; and mighty would be the confusion in poor Yell's mind when something to this effect occurred:

Enter Strontian one morning, a week or so before the sending-in day at the Royal Academy, when the picture is all but finished. Closing one eye, and covering with his hand the brightest light on the canvas, he says,

‘Lehm, my boy, that light must be lowered—plays the devil with the old woman's head.’

‘But,’ says Yell, ‘it was by your advice I made that window the high light.’

‘Yes, very likely; but now I see it with a fresh eye, I am sure it must come down. Yes, sure of it,’ he continues, blinking and winking, and alternately hiding and exposing with his hand the spot in question — ‘sure of it; the more I see it the surer I am; in fact, if it was mine, I would make it all dark behind her—make her head tell light against it. Easily done, you know: pull the blind down, have the curtain across it.’

‘But,’ mildly suggests again poor Yell, ‘that will alter my whole effect; I must have the light coming from the other side.’

‘Yes, of course you must; but what of that—what of that, if it puts the picture all right? You can’t send it as it is; it would do you no end of harm.’

And away goes Strontian, leaving the unhappy tyro fully convinced that, unless he carries out the alteration, the picture is doomed.

Truly, the said alterations involve almost the repainting it throughout, as the whole effect will be reversed, and turned from daylight into lamplight, or something nearly as opposite. The time is short, certainly; but at it goes Yell conscientiously; and when in the course of the next twenty-four hours, by working like a galley-slave, he has effected the greater part of the change, arrives to him Umber, an equally good judge, but of a somewhat different school from Strontian. Walking up to the easel in a jaunty jovial manner, he suddenly stops, and exclaims in an altered tone,

‘Good Heavens! why, what on earth have you been

doing? Why, you've ruined it! Didn't I always say that it was the best thing you had done? That light background was the making of it; it was such a new idea. Now I'll be hanged if you haven't got a dark one!

'Confound it!' cried Yell; 'why, I had it light, and old Strontian said it was a mistake!'

'Then old Strontian is an ass, and I was going to say you're another, my dear boy, for listening to him. Now go to work and scrape all that filth off; it will do you no end of harm to send it in as it is.'

This sort of difficulty, however, with the thousand others incidental to the artist's progress from obscurity to celebrity, has long ago been left far behind, and Lehmann Yell has no longer need of the advice of his colleagues, though he frequently asks it, for form's sake. He knows pretty well what will suit the public, and how to manage his high lights, in more senses than one. His experience has taught him that a fine income and big name are not made in his profession necessarily by skill in using palette and brushes alone—this, of course, is an absolute requisite—but he has found that it is useful to adopt many plans of letting the public know what a clever fellow he is, besides painting more or less good pictures. Hence the card, which is but one of these; and there are hosts of others, if we were only behind the scenes to find them out.

Like most young men, Yell adopted his profession purely from a love of it; and it was only by degrees

that he, with many of his fellows, became warped by the commercial spirit of the age, as represented by Racksell, the eminent dealer, and his fraternity. It was not until he saw others, not a whit more talented than himself, going ahead under the dealer's auspices, and getting high prices for their work, that he became alive to the fact that in many ways he was often surrounded and hustled aside by unscrupulous competition, against which his genius unaided could make but little head.

His first suspicions on this point were aroused thus wise. Having painted a rather successful picture, called 'The Compound,' he sold it a day or two before it went to the Exhibition. It so happened that a certain Scump had painted precisely the same subject, and both works dawned simultaneously upon the town. To Yell's surprise and dismay, there appeared in the *Janusarium* (weekly journal of literature, science, and art), in its first review of the Royal Academy, a most sweeping censure of his work, whilst it held up to the highest admiration Scump's treatment of the same scene. Yell's was all that was bad and that it should not be, Scump's everything that it should be; and most odious comparisons were even adduced to strengthen the censor's position.

The purchaser of Yell's picture, being one of the class who hold this journal as a great authority, declined, upon the strength of the adverse criticism, to complete his bargain. He pleaded that it had 'hopelessly damaged the worth of the picture.' He

was very sorry, but he really could not, he thought, now be expected to take it; and there being, of course, no written agreement on the subject, and no money having been paid, unhappy young Yell was obliged to put up with the loss; whilst his picture, having been sent in as sold, lost its best chance of sale, and it was eventually returned on his hands. Scump's, on the contrary, was immediately snapped up, and several commissions for replicas of it given to him.

Now, if it had so chanced that Yell had been a watchmaker, an upholsterer, a coach-builder, saddler, or manufacturer of any ordinary commodity, and had had his goods so maligned, and with such a result, by a public newspaper, he would probably have recovered heavy damages in a court of law. As it was, being simply a painter, he had no redress. No, no redress; and it was not until Racksell took him up, just after this, and eventually went into partnership with him, as it were, that he saw his way to it, or, indeed, that he could earn very much more than mere bread-and-cheese by his profession. But when that great mind thought it saw in him a profit of some two hundred per cent for itself, if properly managed, wondrous were the secrets divulged by commerce to art, stupendous were the suggestions, the schemes, the dodges that were arranged.

Then, for the first time, Lehmann Yell clearly understood the efficacy of good dinners. Then, for the first time, he understood how it was that the critic of the *Janusarium* preferred Scump's picture to his; had

not Racksell bought it? All wonderment ceased when he saw who were Racksell's guests, and the terms they were on with him.

'In this world,' Racksell would say, 'you can do nothing without fair play; therefore, the simplest, easiest, and in the long-run cheapest method to secure it is to pay for it. You can't get anything, that I have ever found, without doing so. Look at this case. There is Janus, art-critic of the *Janusarium*, who tried very hard to be a painter himself once, went in for pre-Raphaelitism strongly, but it would not do—could not get on; so took to writing (all the unsuccessful artists take to writing), and when he got employment on the journal, wrote down everything that did not come from the hand of his own particular little coterie, the particular clique from which he sprang. But poverty at last eased his conscience a little, and he began to see merit elsewhere when it was worth his while. Hence his admiration for Scump, who, though not a pre-Raphaelite himself, nevertheless managed, through his backer (your humble servant), to get the blind side of Janus, as you know to your cost. Janus had then no reasons for discovering your good points; but you will see it won't occur again. Come and meet him at dinner on Monday, you'll find him a very good fellow; and I'll warrant, if you ask him to call and look at what you are doing, and tell him it belongs to me, the *Janusarium* will be quite alive to its beauties—and hey, presto! the thing is done, the critic is softened, and your fortune is made!'

Sure enough this is the case. Yell has his foot now on the first round of the ladder, and it is his own fault if he does not go steadily up. There is a clear stage for him and no favour; and although he is bound hand and foot to Racksell for some years, and only makes a third of the money by painting his pictures that the dealer does by selling them, he is buying so much experience, and by the time the partnership is at an end he emerges at least a man of business and of the world. Yes, man of the world enough never quite to break with Racksell to the end of his days; for not the least important of the examples from which he took warning was that which clearly taught him, that if he did not always retain Racksell as his backer, and let him have a certain percentage of the pictures he (Yell) executed, that astute individual would not scruple to decry his labour to the public in quite as vehement a tone as he had shouted its merits. The ultimate fate of Scump afforded proof of the advisability of such policy; for he, believing himself to be a great genius (which he was not), broke with one dealer after another, and treated them all so cavalierly, that at last he had great difficulty in selling anything he did. The Rack-sells so abused his pictures wherever they appeared, that scarcely one collector in fifty had sufficient confidence in his own judgment to speculate in them.

Now if Yell, through a certain tendency to repeat himself, and a certain evidence of sloppiness and haste in his painting, is not quite so great and conscientious a painter as he promised to be before he knew the

dealers and prosperity, he is, at any rate, enabled to purchase the roomy mansion in Glenroy-square. You cannot have everything, you know, in this life; and if, when he had forced his name upon the public, and there was a great demand for his work, Racksell would sometimes carry off bodily a picture from the easel half finished (for there must not be more than a certain amount of time given to each production), why—although there was a chance of his reputation suffering eventually—his purse was considerably the heavier. Having made a name under Racksell's skilful management, everything, however slight, bearing it was worth its weight in gold, if only offered in the proper quarter—that is to say, amongst such collectors—and they are the majority—as, not knowing much about painting, deem it necessary to have one or more specimens of every eminent name.

If, in consequence of a too continuous stream of somewhat indifferent Yells being thus poured into the market, there is a glut, and for a time they hang fire, some means is taken to give them a fillip. This check to their sale naturally has a very depressing effect on their author, and by degrees his health begins to suffer, which fact becoming noised abroad, at first one scarcely knows how, a paragraph finds its way into the *Janusarium*, something after this fashion :

‘ Our readers will learn with much regret that that eminent artist, Lehmann Yell, Esq., has for a long time been suffering from rather serious symptoms, which have recently increased to such an extent as to cause

the utmost anxiety, if not alarm, to his friends. The most skilful medical authorities have been consulted, and it has been reported that their opinion is far from favourable.'

'Sad thing,' Racksell will say the next day in his gallery or show-room, as it may be called, to possible purchaser, contemplating a recent production from Yell's easel. 'Very, very sad thing indeed; quite a young man too, and *such* a genius—has not done half that he will if he is spared a few years; but they tell me it's a very serious case, little or no hope; and I am sure he looks like a ghost—never was so shocked in my life as when I saw him the other day. I got this from him' (pointing to the picture) 'after great persuasion; he was very loth to part with it, for he said he felt quite sure it would be the last thing he should ever do, and he knew his wife would be very angry with him for letting it go; but I got it, you see, and it will be worth any money when he's gone.'

'But,' timidly suggests the purchaser, 'those hands—a little unfinished, are they not? Not quite, eh?'

'O, very likely, very likely,' interposes Racksell; 'a man in his condition could not be expected to pay attention to every detail; but then look at the fire in that expression; look at the go there is in that action; and what a feeling for colour! Why, in many respects it is finer than anything he ever did, in those points which are the true tests of genius; and as to a few details, they are comparatively unimportant when we have so many other fine qualities. But don't you

take it, don't be persuaded by me, unless you thoroughly like it; only I advise you to make up your mind, for when it is known that he won't paint any more, I sha'n't have much difficulty in finding an owner for it. However, if you like to have it for a thousand pounds now, you shall, because I rather want the money; but if I have to keep it till the poor fellow is dead, you won't get it for twice that sum.'

Thus a stimulus is given to the market, the picture is probably sold at once; or, if the purchaser requires confirmation of the report, and pays the unhappy invalid a visit, he will find grave cause for apprehension. There is no doubt the poor man is in a low condition of mind and body, and that, with his melancholy smile and enfeebled gait, he quite carries out the idea of a person in ill-health.

He does not positively say he is going to die, 'but he doubts if he shall ever be able to paint again—certainly not for the next year or two. Mr. Racksell took the last picture he was at work upon, and he really does not know whether he means to part with it.'

Thus the game is kept up between 'painter and puffer,' and the ball flies briskly from one to the other, and all goes merry again as a marriage-bell; for, of course, Yell recovers, and lives to issue for many years his cards of invitation. A little unscrupulous all this may sound perhaps, but cannot a parallel be found for it in many commercial transactions? Are other markets never rigged? Are they always conducted upon such very pure principles that we shall expect the dealings in

painting to be quite exempt from similar management? We know certainly that art is supposed to be a high and ennobling pursuit; that it should elevate all associated with it far above the petty speculations and venalities of the rest of mankind. We know that it should be loved and pursued for its own sake; that it is a mistress who will brook no rivals, whose soul is made up of love and poetry and a highly sensitive and nervous craving for sympathy, which its followers can do nothing without.

Yes, we know all this, and a good deal more to the same effect, for, in some moods, Yell will descant with great eloquence upon such points. He will tell you that he is never happy unless at his easel; that he never thinks of anything else (quite true at one time in his life); that artists can't be expected to be men of business. What should they know about buying and selling?—they live in a world of their own—a world of fancy, imagination, and poetry, with feelings and nerves of the most exquisite sensibility, attuned to a particular key with the utmost nicety, which is totally incompatible with the rougher and more material pursuits of humanity.

Such facts of course are patent to us all; we have been taught them from our earliest days, and the theory is perfect. But somehow the practice does not seem quite to bear it out. Whether it is that mankind has grown less conscientious since the so-called halcyon days of painting, and we lack the noble disinterested spirit which we hear so much of in connection with the

Old Masters; or whether the go-ahead, fast, competitive, advertising tone of the present age is to blame; or whether, after all, there has not been, and will for ever be, as vast an amount of cant and humbug talked about art as of everything else, we know not; but certain it is there is just as much of a mercantile, bartering, sordid, avaricious spirit developed by the dealings in it as there is in the buying and selling of stocks and shares, boots and shoes, or hides and tallow.

Our own private belief is, that human nature is much the same all the world over; and if money had been as essential in Titian's time, or if Michael Angelo had had to get his living as Yell has, it is possible that they would have been quite as open to the temptations of the Racksells of the period, had they existed, as are our Yells and Scumps of 1869.

Indeed, who shall say that they were not? Their paint and canvas will for ever remain indisputable records of their power as artists; but their written history! Ah, well, we all know the worth of written history when it has to do with actions that leave no mark—with the smaller details of domestic life, and the larger ones too, for that matter. It is not easy to get at the absolute facts concerning our contemporaries even; many-tongued Rumour lies like a thief every day about us all, despite the modern facilities of intercommunication, despite steam, electric telegraphy, and cheap literature; and false reports are so bandied about through every channel, that it is mighty difficult for the most conscientious of biographers or historians to retain

nothing but the truth ; and that commodity surely was quite as far down the well two or three centuries ago, and when those art-chroniclers Lanzi and Vasari wrote, as it is now.

The present mode of writing history has thrown many strange and new lights upon the character and doings of some of our historical idols ; and if we ever have a Froude to give us the lives of the Old Masters, who shall say that we may not have equally startling revelations made about them ?

Had it been a question for them of a top room in Chipstone-street, with its accompanying conditions, and art alone, pure and simple, for the one idol and compensator for everything, or the mansion in Glenroy-square, with their sons at Eton, and their names on every hoarding, how would they have decided ? Had they lived in the present day, would they not have been as prone, despite their great genius, to look upon painting as being quite as good a mercantile speculation as in most quarters it is nowadays considered with us ?

We will grant that the greater a man's genius and power with his brush, the less necessity will there be after a while for extraneous puffs. His work in time will establish his fame ; but, in such a competitive age, he will have to take care that while the grass is growing the steed does not starve, and it all depends upon his disposition, temperament, and elasticity of conscience as to what fortuitous aid he will invoke for his advancement.

THE PHANTOM FLASH.

A Christmas Mystery.

It is the afternoon of Christmas-day in the outskirts of an old-fashioned English country town. The weather is dull and gloomy; a heavy white fog, that is as wet as rain, rests on everything, and curtails by an hour or more the short winter daylight. The parsonage-house, red-bricked and antique, is the last building on the Wenborough road; yet, although placed apart in its own garden, it is not lonely; for nearly opposite to it, on the other side of the way and forming the end of the straggling street, stands the comfortable hostelry known as the Reindeer. A stable-boy leads from the yard of the inn a sturdy old horse across to the gable-ended porch of the parsonage, where is waiting a young man fitly habited as for a journey in such weather, and who, after a short parley and affectionate farewell to a girl who has accompanied him to the door, mounts, and rides off just as the dim twilight is settling into night.

Whilst he trots down the old avenue of trees that overhang the road, for a mile or more, his thoughts run somewhat to this effect: 'It is very hard to have to leave her on this of all nights in the year—the first Christmas, too, we have ever passed together; and yet

a country doctor must get used to such things—and so must his wife that is to be. She did not like my coming, I could see, and for a little there would have been a tiff; though her own good sense told her I could not, either as a matter of business or humanity, neglect a patient *in extremis*. Well, by making a push for it, I should get the whole business over within three hours; Wenborough is but ten miles off, and though done out of my dinner, I may still be back in time to sup with Lucy, her good old father the parson, and their few friends;’ and as this thought strikes him, he urges his horse into a hand-gallop along the miry way. Basil Skepton is new to this part of the country, and has never been along that road by night before, and it is now growing so dark, even as he emerges from the trees on to the open down-like country, across which his route lies, that he trusts mainly to his horse to find it. The animal, a native, knows it well; for scores and scores of times, at all seasons and in all weathers, upon similar errands, has he traversed it, with the old doctor, his master, on his back—the old doctor, who, now taking things easy, leaves horse and practice in the hands of our young friend, his new partner. Rattler, however, on this occasion seems averse to his job, probably objecting equally with his rider to the fate which so ruthlessly interferes with Christmas festivities. Constantly he displays not only a disposition to stand stock-still, but positively to turn round, as if with the intention of returning. Basil again and again has to use force to keep him going, and by the time they

reach the foot of a steep hill, the most that can be got out of the obstinate steed is an ambling sort of walk.

The darkness increases in intensity every moment, and it is as if horse and man were riding against an impenetrable wall ; yet they *do* progress, for the young doctor is of a determined spirit, not easily daunted when he has once made up his mind—to wit, when he came to Rookchester first, but three months back, he set his heart on winning Lucy Thetworth, and he is to be married to her within three weeks. Little likely, therefore, is it that, being called upon to see a sick patient at Wenborough, and having once started on his unwelcome journey, he will let the mere laziness of a dumb animal or the obscurity of an unknown road turn him from his purpose.

What, then, can it be that, in a little less than an hour after he has ridden forth from that parsonage-house on his mission of mercy, has sent him and his horse flying back at such lightning speed along the road and into the old silent street and up to the inn-yard, with such a clatter and rush, that doors are opened, windows thrown up, and heads thrust out to learn what the need can be for this unwonted haste upon a Christmas night ?

‘ Come, friends ; we must have one more glass, if it is only to drink the toast of all toasts, “ Absent friends.” It was very unlucky,’ continued the kind-hearted pastor, as he filled his glass and pushed the bottle round, ‘ that poor Basil was sent for at such a time, yet so it must

ever be ; we cannot manage these things as we should like, and doubtless it is better for us. We make blunders enough in life as it is, and if we had things all our own way, I wonder what would become of us ! So we will drink his health in connection with this our crowning toast. Nay, Lucy, don't pout your lip ; he was obliged to go, and faced his duty like a man. Here, child, take a sip out of my glass !'

It was a merry little Christmas party gathered round the table in the quaint old wainscoted and panelled dining-room at Rookchester parsonage, and the few friends there assembled joined heartily in drinking the health proposed ; for the good social custom had not in those days, and especially in those parts, died out. Basil Skepton was toasted with all honours, and Lucy, good-humouredly rallied by her father, retorted in the merriest mood by returning thanks for her lover in an amusing and funny little speech.

'Ah,' mused the parson, as a lull in the conversation succeeded the laughter consequent upon his daughter's words, 'it is twenty years ago, this very night, since I myself had to take the very journey he is gone upon. Twenty years ago ! How the time flies !'

'Well, papa, never mind ; you have told the story so often that we all know it !' interrupted Lucy, as she playfully put her finger on her father's lips, but with some show of undue anxiety in her face. 'Besides, you know it is not good for you ever to talk about it ; it always makes you ill ;' and, indeed, an unnatural sort

of pallor, and, as it seemed, a slight trembling of his whole frame, had passed over the old gentleman, as his thoughts reverted to the bygone time.

‘Yes, it is foolish,’ he went on ; ‘but it always does affect me strangely—the recollection of that night, and it has cast a cloud over many of my Christmas-days. Very seldom have I forgotten it, but I had done so to-day, until that unlucky messenger came for Basil,—just about the same time, too, that I was sent for,’ he added abstractedly.

One of the guests at the farther end of the table, not apparently noticing these symptoms, or only partially overhearing what had passed, now interposed :

‘Eh ! what is that ? Going to tell us a story ? Do, by all means. This is the season for stories.’

‘Why, did you never hear it ? I thought all my friends knew it ; for one of the curious parts of it is, that whenever it comes into my mind I feel an irrepressible desire to tell it ; and I could go on telling it over and over again, in all its minutest details. This is what it was ;’ and as Mr. Thetworth began with the words, ‘I had only had this living a few months,’ his agitation visibly increased, his face became ash-like in its paleness, and it seemed to cost him a great effort to speak. Before, however, there was time for any one to interrupt him, or beg him to desist, he continued, in a hurried voice : ‘This chit here was but five years old when I was called away to—to—’ then he suddenly stopped, stood up, put his hand to his head, and there, amidst his friends, and with these significant words on

his lips, the good clergyman, staggering from his chair, fell forwards lifeless upon the floor, as if he had been shot through the heart!

Twenty minutes later, the clatter of the hoofs of Basil's horse upon the pavement of Rookchester aroused Lucy for the first time from her father's side, where, seemingly unconscious, she had remained prone from the moment when the frightened friends and servants had placed him on his bed.

Intuitively she seemed to know whose return the sound presaged. She sprang to her feet, and was at the open door, and across the road to the stable-yard, almost with the rapidity of thought. Heeding not the little crowd of wondering idlers that had gathered round the steaming trembling horse, she pushed her way to its head, where stood Basil, endeavouring to soothe the animal, and appearing to explain to those around what had turned him back.

'Come at once! come at once!' she cried. 'He cannot be dead! I will not believe it until you have said, so! The thought of that dreadful time has killed him! O, why, why did I let you go? But for that, he would never have reverted to it; and had you stayed with us, he would have been living now. But no! he is not dead; I will not believe it!' repeated the half-frantic girl, as she hurried her bewildered lover into that house of mourning, which, but an hour before, he had left as one of the happiest that could have been found throughout the land, on that of all happy nights in the year.

A year has passed, and it is again the afternoon of Christmas-day in Rookchester. Lucy and Basil have been married some few weeks, and are sitting in the snug study of the house to which, with the practice of his partner and predecessor, the young doctor has succeeded.

Nothing in the way of festivities marks the day. The promise that they should pass it in perfect retirement alone induced Lucy to agree to the wedding taking place before Christmas. Naturally, however, it is a difficult task to get through the day without some reference to the sad event of the previous year, and they fall unavoidably into talking about it. They have not often done so, but now Lucy has been confiding to her husband her own inmost thoughts, and, yielding to his inquiries, is going to tell him the precise story which she—alas, from too often hearing—knows so well, and which her father was hindered from repeating by his unlooked-for and sudden death. Basil has never heard it, and folding his arm tenderly around her, holds her close to his heart as she begins :

‘I never knew my mother, as you are aware ; and almost my first recollection of my father dates from the time when I was about five years old. I have a dim memory of sitting on his knee just before going to bed, on one particular Christmas evening ; of being awakened soon after by the clatter of a horse’s hoofs, followed by a great commotion in the house ; of hearing that he had been hurt in the wrist, and of seeing him for weeks afterwards going about with his arm in a sling ; and,

in my tiny way, I seemed to fancy he had suddenly grown a great deal older and graver. I remember there was some excitement, too, in the town, and a talk about a man being hanged; but of course it was only years later that I understood all about it. I have heard my father tell the story many and many a time, and he never did so without being much affected, nor without the same grave miserable look, which had caught my childish eye, coming over him. I always dissuaded him, if I could, from reverting to the subject, but seldom succeeded; he was hopelessly fascinated by it.

‘It appeared that just after I had been taken to my little bed that Christmas night he was sent for, in his capacity of clergyman, to see a dying woman at Wenborough—much as *you* were sent for last year to see a patient; and it was the sense of the coincidence which made me, somehow, so averse to your going. I had a presentiment of danger—alas, too well founded!

‘The weather was very bad, and he could hardly see his hand before him; but trusting to the sure-footedness of his horse soon reached the chalk cutting through which the road crosses the ridge of hills, called, as you know, the “Edgeway,” half-way between here and Wenborough. It had not long then, he told me, been made; and he explained that it was cut through the downs to save the steepness of the hill—a piece of engineering, in those old coaching times, thought very highly of. At the top you may have noticed a gap in the cutting, through which a sort of narrow cart-road leads up at *right angles* on to the open fields. Well, as I say, he

had reached this spot, when suddenly there was a terrific flash of light from out the gap, followed by a loud report, and it showed him a man—a soldier—for he distinctly recognised his undress cap, the buttons glittering on his heavy horseman's blue coat, with its narrow strip of red facing—and a pistol extended from his upraised hand.

‘Thus much he saw only for a second, but it was sufficient to bring about what followed. Simultaneously with the light, and what it revealed to him, he felt a sharp blow in his bridle-arm, and his hand, relaxing its grasp upon the rein, fell useless by his side.

‘The horse, scared from its wits, swerved round and galloped back those long five miles, never stopping until it reached its stable-door, where my father fell into the ostler's arms, faint from loss of blood. He had barely managed to keep his seat, and had he had to travel another hundred yards, he must have fallen from his saddle. They brought him home, and found a bullet had partly shattered the arm-bone at the wrist; but when it was dressed and put into a splint, he was able to tell his tale.’

Basil follows Lucy's words with the utmost interest, which increases tenfold as she reaches the climax of the story. As she speaks of the flash of light he almost starts from her side, and appears about to interrupt her, but he merely murmurs, ‘How strange! how very strange!’

Scarcely noticing this, she proceeds:

‘In those days there was always a cavalry regiment

stationed at Rookchester, and there had been of late many acts of daring highway robbery and deeds of violence, which were attributed to the soldiers, but this was the first in which a sufferer had been able to identify a trooper as the criminal; and even now my father could not swear to the man, he could only swear that it was a soldier that had fired. This, however, was sufficient, and it was thought necessary, for the public good, to follow it up, and, if possible, identify the man, and make a public example of him. Notice, therefore, was immediately given at the barracks, to try and catch the soldier as he returned. I think what is termed a check-roll was called, the men's kits were searched, and a pistol found to be missing from one of them. This was discovered in a ditch near the farm-road by the gap in the cutting, and thus led eventually to the identification of the criminal. The man, of course, was hanged, for even sheep-stealing in those days met with capital punishment. The circumstances connected with the execution, however, were what preyed so on my father's mind, and seemed to imprint themselves there indelibly. He was chaplain of the gaol, and of course it fell to him to visit the condemned prisoner; his professional position thus bringing him into the curious relations with the man of being at once his accuser and his exhorter to repentance. The criminal had wit enough to see this, and never failed at their interviews to twit my father with it. "Had *you* forgiven me, as you tell me God would do, I might have had time to repent," he would say. "As it is, I cannot wipe out the crime of

a lifetime in the few hours that are left to me. But beware! if there be this hereafter about which you talk so much, I may have my revenge upon you yet. If my spirit can revisit the scenes of my last days, look to it! When Christmas-time comes round, you sha'n't forget me if I can help it, and in the long-run I'll be even with you, you may be sure!"

'Up to the end he was unrepentant, and continued in this strain; and on the scaffold, whither, of course, my father was obliged to accompany him, his last words were those of vengeance.

'You say,' continues Lucy, after a pause, 'that my father died from disease of the heart. Is it not possible that the constant and sudden recurrence of these memories accelerated it at last?'

'Doubtless,' replies Basil abstractedly, for he has fallen into a profound state of thought; 'yet although it explains much, it renders much inexplicable;' and again he ponders. Quickly arousing himself, he turns to his wife and says, 'Lucy, you have never asked me, and I have been loth to revert to anything that should recall your unhappiness to you, what brought me back so unexpectedly on the night of your father's death. You will remember, if you think, that had I completed the journey on which I started, I could not have returned here well under three hours, whereas I was gone little more than one.'

'Truly,' says his wife: 'that has never occurred to me before; so full was I of my own grief, I thought of nothing else. I only know that, as I heard your horse

gallop through the street, I seemed to have gone back twenty years ; I felt as I did when, as a child, I was awakened by the sound of my father's horse traversing the same ground at the like speed.'

'Well,' resumes Basil, 'there is indeed a mystery here ; what you say even makes it greater, for it seems almost impossible to disconnect the two events. Listen ! Just as twenty years ago your father set out for Wenborough, and returned, his mission unfulfilled, so this night twelve months ago did I. I, like him, had reached the Edgeway cutting, and, like him, was met at that self-same gap by a tremendous flash of light—a flash that, for a second, despite the blackness of the night, showed me road and horse and cliffs of chalk and byway, all as plain as one may see it by the day ; but, unlike him, I saw no figure, heard no sound, received no hurt ; but my horse, like his, scared from its wits, turned round, and before I could control him had the bit fast between his teeth, and was galloping back at a pace impossible to check, never stopping till he reached the stable-yard, covered with foam, and trembling from head to foot. I had barely time to dismount, no time to collect my thoughts, or to explain, before you, full of your grief, had taken me by the arm. Then what followed has absorbed all my attention for months. The mysterious light scarce crossed my mind, and never troubled me ; I set it down as coming, perhaps, from a sudden meteor, or the striking of the horse's shoe upon a flint, or perhaps from the lighting of a pipe by some belated countryman in the little lane ; but now that

you have related your father's story to me I am not so satisfied. The coincidence is most strange : the actual anniversary of the event—the very spot on which it happened—nay, as I think of it, it must have been, too, almost at the very hour—ay, the very hour at which your father was struck down ! It was little more than five when I started, less than three-quarters of an hour took me to the place, and before six he was dead. Did you ever hear what time it was the soldier fired at him ?' inquires Basil, as he pauses.

'About six, as near as could be told.'

'Then, you see, it corresponds. The coincidence, if such it be, is complete.'

Husband and wife sit looking at each other in silence for some minutes. They are both impressed evidently by the remarkable nature of the circumstances their conversation has revealed. A slight shade of superstitious fear is upon them both, and it is doubtful if it has ever been quite removed, at any rate from Lucy's mind. As for the doctor—well, he is a middle-aged man now, very scientific in his tastes, and outwardly a repudiator of all things appertaining to spiritualism ; but whenever he relates the story, he is fain to admit that science has hitherto not quite unveiled the mysterious source of invisible forces, and that anyhow the light which turned him back on his journey, on that eventful night, has ever remained to him unexplained.


THE RED-LEATHER POCKET-BOOK.

A Volunteer's Story, in Three Volumes.

I. HOW I CAME BY IT.

THERE lies before me, on the table at which I write, a pocket-book ; a faded, bulging, crumpled, red-leather pocket-book, stained and spotted, as with exposure to wet and long use.

I have just read for the twentieth time, ere replacing them, its somewhat bulky contents ; and they have left my mind in such a fever of emotion, in such a conflicting state of gratitude and relief, of misery and depression, that I cannot feel they show me more than a rift in that gloom which has hung over me for now these thirteen years past. Still I hail it gratefully ; and through it perceive a reason why I ought, in justice to myself, to record my version of certain events, which otherwise I would gladly have allowed to remain hidden in that oblivion into which, in these rapid-going days, even some of the most startling tragedies in private life are soon allowed to pass. That pocket-book contains their sequel—the narratives which impel me to action. They are messages from the sea, washed up in the flotsam and jetsam of a great wreck. They have just been



given into my possession, for it is to me that they are directed. Had not an inconceivably malicious spirit of revenge kept them back—ah, how much misery I might have been spared! A misery, too, which, but for the ocean thus giving up one of its myriad secrets, I must have carried unrelieved to the grave.

A week ago the whole country was thrown into a state of consternation by the accounts of a terrible disaster in the Channel. A large ship filled with German emigrants, bound for New York, foundered, with nearly every soul on board, in a heavy gale off Shingle Head. Some few escaped, by a miracle, in the boats; but of the rest little or no trace has been discovered. Here and there a body has been washed up; and yesterday morning I read in the newspaper the following paragraph:

‘Some Newhaven fishermen, when about five miles out at sea, on the evening of the 3d instant, descried an object floating, and, on bearing up to it, found it to be the body of a woman; it was supported by a life-belt, and, considering the time it must have been in the water, presented comparatively few marks of disfigurement. It was recognisable as that of rather a handsome muscular person of about five-and-thirty; and when eventually brought on shore, the authorities discovered, through certain articles in the pockets of the dress, that the name of the unfortunate creature was Pauline Imhaüsli, obviously one of the passengers on board the ill-fated ship.’

Having read thus far, the paper nearly fell from my hands, and I stood up as if I had been electrified. But

this was as nothing to the sensations I experienced when, controlling myself, I finished the paragraph.

'Amongst these articles,' it went on, 'and sewn up in a sort of waterproof money-girdle worn round the waist, was a red-leather pocket-book containing a sealed packet, addressed, in a foreign handwriting, to Gerald Mostyn, the Elms, Fulham'—my own name and address! Half an hour afterwards the red-leather pocket-book had been put into my hands by an inspector of police.

II. WHY IT CONCERNED ME.

FULL of generous impulses, but wild, wayward, and in some matters exceedingly selfish, and with a vein of morbid cynicism amounting almost, at times, to savageness, Ernest Imhaüsli was a mere lad when I first knew him and his sister Pauline.

The peculiarities and contradictions of his character even then were conspicuous, and grew more so, of course, as he reached man's estate. His half-German parentage and his more than half-German nature accounted for much that was unusual in him, and which therefore did not interfere with one's appreciation of his good points. Well-educated, he had read far more than most young fellows of his age, and, without making a display of his knowledge, he would put it at your disposal in a frank and genial way. He was punctiliously honourable and exact in all his dealings, and it was chiefly when he approached the deeper and more philosophical regions of thought and speculation that he

displayed, in spite of a tendency to reticence and secretiveness, what I can still only call the morbid side of his mind. It was not natural—certainly not healthy—to hear such a youngster express himself on the gravest questions of our existence with a decision and audacity that is rarely to be found even amongst the most matured intellects. Yet I liked him—loved him almost; for, indeed, then I had good reason; and at this distance of time, and for my present purpose, it is unnecessary to say much more about his characteristics.

When he began his business career, and came straight from Germany to our office, at the age of seventeen, it devolved upon me, as his immediate senior, to initiate him into the mysteries of London commercial life. This led easily to my officiating in the same capacity with regard to social life, and we became inseparable. His mother, a widow, was an Englishwoman, and brought him and his sister to London soon after their father's death. This gentleman had been the agent for our house of business at Kiel, and hence his son's introduction to the firm. I was only an occasional visitor at his home, though he was frequently one at mine; for, truth to tell, I never cared much for his two relations. Why a young, handsome, and accomplished girl should have affected me so disagreeably as his sister did is a question I will not stop long to speculate about. It may have arisen from one of those mysterious antipathies which we do occasionally take towards a fellow-creature, and which, in this instance, may have been due to a dim unrecognised prescience of

the misery she was destined to cause me, or (and this is the more likely) it was because I fancied she regarded me with very [different feelings. Paradoxical as this latter solution may seem, it is explained in the simple fact, that there was no room in my heart left for any new image.

When I first made the acquaintance of the Imhäusli I had been engaged only a few days. But as three or four years must elapse ere I should be in a position to marry, the subject was kept a profound secret. Useless now is it to conjecture how things might have fared had I been more open ; but so pertinaciously did I keep my own counsel, that I sincerely believe neither brother nor sister had the slightest idea of how matters stood with me until all the mischief had been done.

Thus much, in justice to them, I am bound to state. Well, I have said that Ernest was constantly at my father's house, and, indeed, he became acquainted with most of those people who were known to us, and of course, amongst them, the one who was more than all the rest to me. We saw little comparatively of Mrs. Imhäusli and her daughter—the bond of personal friendship between Ernest and myself alone creating the intimacy. This, during the second year of my stay in England, was greatly strengthened by a circumstance which must be here briefly related.

We were both athletes, he particularly, and, being strong and active, he soon made the skill he had acquired in his native gymnasium available in those *British sports* which came within our scope. Notably, h

fell readily into the English style of rowing ; he pulled a good oar ; and many and many is the spurt we had in the summer evenings upon the upper reaches of the silver Thames. On one of these occasions, between Kew and Richmond, we two were pulling up on the full flood at a great pace, when a boating-party of some half-drunken roughs, whom we were overtaking, and should have passed in another minute, seeing us coming, pulled suddenly across our bows, as if with the purpose of getting to the other side. There was a crash and a splash ; something struck me heavily on the back of the head, and I remembered nothing more for many hours. Afterwards I learned that, at the moment of the collision, and when our boat had capsized, I was stunned by a blow from an oar which one of the roughs, instead of unshipping, continued wildly pulling at, and I was seen to sink like a stone—seen by Imhaüsli, who knew instinctively, with the presence of mind of a thorough swimmer, that under such circumstances I might not rise again until too late. Quick as thought he dived—failed to find me ; twice he came up unsuccessful, only on the third time bringing me to the surface. Only then, too, were the miserable originators of the accident able to render any assistance ; but by them we were taken on shore, Ernest being now nearly as insensible as myself. Ten minutes, however, sufficed to bring him round ; but it took unremitted exertion, and all the known restoratives at hand, to revive me. For three-quarters of an hour I lay apparently dead, and should, in the enforced absence of a doctor, more than once

have been given up as such, but for Ernest's persistency. Thus the preservation of my life was due to him in a double sense.

‘So you were unconscious for more than two hours?’ says Ernest meditatively, in one of our first talks over the affair, when I was quite restored. ‘Curious now it is to speculate how it would have fared with you had I listened to the fools around us, and given up my efforts to bring back signs of life? Curious to think *when* and *where* you would next have awakened? You were dead to all seeming; the soul, that vital essence, had quite departed—whither, I should like to know; and if anywhere, why not in full consciousness? If, relieved from the trammels of the body, as yours was, it be capable of consciousness, why cannot you, or your soul, give some account of yourself during those two hours? But for me you were actually dead. Had I not reëvoked the beating of your pulse, the next change we should have seen in you, had we stood by long enough, would have been putrefaction. Hence, I say that to all intents and purposes your soul had fled; and yet, being brought back, it can tell no tale—can tell nothing until reinstated in its mortal home. Bah! My dear friend, what more proof can you want that this life is the be-all and the end-all?’

I raised my hand in deprecation of these sentiments, and, shocked and grieved to hear them from the lips of a man to whom I owed my life, I turned the conversation. I only set his words down here, because they may offer some explanation of how his extreme views

wrought him up to that state of mind which rendered the catastrophe that embittered my life possible.

Eighteen hundred and fifty-nine, the year which saw the arming of the Volunteers, was just three years after the accident on the river. The conditions of our friendship and intercourse, as I have sketched them, remaining unchanged, it is not strange that Ernest and myself soon stood shoulder to shoulder in the ranks of the same metropolitan rifle corps. We were, like the rest of the young men, actively enthusiastic about the movement, and indefatigable at drill. And I must not here omit to mention that the new interest it created seemed for a time to act healthily on Ernest; for, in spite of his self-contained nature, he had latterly been showing signs of depression and discontent. He could not always restrain himself either from muttered expressions of regret at the slowness of promotion in the merchant's career. 'A mere underling without capital, like myself,' he said one day, as we were walking to our parade-ground, 'will have to wait till he is forty before he can think of marrying. With you, Gerald, it is very different. I wonder you don't get a wife.'

Then, as I at last foresaw that my wedding-day would be fixed before the end of the year, I disclosed to him my secret. He expressed no astonishment, congratulated me, and asked me who the lady was. As I answered him I was quite unconscious, I repeat, of his betraying any emotion whatever. His face, to me, wore its usual impassive expression; yet, perhaps, had I been of keener observation, I should have seen at least

a quiver of the lip, or a tinge of heightened colour on the cheek.

In those days, all appertaining to volunteering was in its infancy, and everybody was beginning at the beginning; thus aiming-drill was a conspicuous feature in our work. It is necessary for my purpose to explain that this aiming-drill consisted in going through the motions of loading and cocking the piece, and pressing the trigger with the proper time and steadiness essential for the making of good marksmen. Dummy targets, in the shape of rough cartoons of soldiers, were set up at the end of the parade-ground, and the musketry-instructor lectured on the elevation and the alignment of the sights required in taking aim at the different distances. The next step towards acquiring steadiness was snapping caps, to accustom us to a slight explosion; and this routine was carried on for several weeks before we were intrusted with even blank cartridge.

So time wore away to within a week of my wedding, which was fixed for the first week of December 1859. Ernest Imhäusli's depression of manner had returned, I thought, somewhat lately; but he was indefatigable at drill, and walked down with me as usual to the last I was to attend as a bachelor.

There was to have been a march out of the corps to a suburban common, for the purpose of giving us our first experience of firing blank cartridge. Fifteen rounds of this ammunition were served out to each man immediately we fell in; but rain just then coming on, the project was abandoned, and another drill substituted in

our shed. We had been snapping caps in the customary manner, and had returned to the armoury, when, after restoring our unused ammunition, a discussion, started by Imhaüsli, arose, characterised by all the eagerness and some of the folly belonging to young recruits, as to the steadiness which could be maintained in aiming at living men instead of dummies.

‘Don’t tell me,’ said I, ‘that you could stand at one end of this room, and, aiming at my breast, even snap a cap at me as steadily as you could at the target!’

Several asserted that they could, Imhaüsli amongst them.

The foolish experiment was tried; and I experienced the unpleasant sensation of looking down the muzzle of a rifle pointed straight at me not twenty paces off. I could see that most of the men blinked and wavered at the moment they snapped the cap; not one of their pieces was steady. At last it came to Ernest’s turn, and seizing his rifle, he brought it briskly to his shoulder at full cock. He was a long while taking aim, but, when at length he had fairly covered my heart, the muzzle did not swerve a hair’s-breadth; his face was the picture of calm and steady determination. Yet just as I thought he was about to fire he brought the piece suddenly down, uncocked it, and said: ‘No, I could not pull the trigger; my nerve forsook me at the supreme moment.’

Then he laughed a short hard laugh, and added: ‘No; why, the muzzle would have wavered like a

weathercock. Here, Gerald, do you try now—see what effect aiming at a man's heart has upon your nerves,' and he handed me his rifle; for I, acting as the target, had left mine in the rack. Then Imhaüsli changed places with me; he stood up, I retired to the proper distance, cocked the rifle, saw that the cap was in its place, brought it slowly up, mentally counted the regulation one, two, three, four, and determining in my foolish pride to be as steady as Ernest, with the muzzle directed straight at his breast, pressed the trigger without flinching.

Simultaneously with the explosion the recoil of the piece told me it was loaded.

There was a wild shriek, a rush forward, a roar of sound in my ears, a blinding smoke, and at my feet, Ernest Imhaüsli, motionless, with a stream of blood oozing through the breast of his gray uniform!

To linger on what followed would cost me, even now that I have just read the contents of that pocket-book, too much pain. I have scarcely been able to write thus far, so vividly is the whole misery brought back to me. Ernest was dead—shot through the heart, and by my hand! The rifle, by some utterly unaccountable means, had been loaded, and with ball-cartridge. The bullet had gone straight through his body, and was buried in the wall beyond. Three minutes before, and that identical weapon had been turned against me!

What did it all mean? For thirteen years I have

asked myself this question, and until yesterday no suspicion of the truth ever crossed my mind.

III. WHAT IT CONTAINED.

A LETTER, directed to me, from Pauline Imhäusli, dated

‘Kiel, March 1860.

‘So long as I live you shall suffer; shall remain in the full conviction that you slew my brother through your own folly; shall be kept in ignorance of the only facts that can mitigate your remorse. This is how I can best nourish my revenge; but, if you survive me, I do not desire to carry it beyond the grave. Therefore I write this, in explanation of why I keep back the enclosed leaves torn from Ernest’s diary.

‘I loved you desperately, madly, even from our first meeting. I thought you saw that I did, and I encouraged hope; but when you made no sign, I believed I was wrong, and that you had not understood me. Then, bent only upon one object, I determined at any risk to show you my heart. I fear I did this more plainly than became the modesty of woman. When you were still silent, and appeared to avoid me, there commenced a change in my feelings; my vanity was outraged; I said to myself, “Does this man know what he rejects so scornfully? Does he hold such love as mine so light, that he goes to the length of spurning it?” Yes, it was so. And in time I grew to hate you for it, as much as I once loved you. One day, Ernest brought the news that you were going to be married, and I be-

gan to seek some means of revenge. His death, soon after, by your hand, supplied me with them. I knew that after *that* you never could be happy, but it made me so to know your anguish.

‘Your marriage, to begin with, was postponed; this was one step in my revenge, and an evidence of your misery. I gloried in it. When I came upon Ernest’s diary, I read in the latest entries words that, as I have stated, might, in a degree, solace you. Then again I said to myself, with increased gratification, “I will retain them; and lo! I keep alive an agony in the heart of the man who shot him, which in itself is vengeance!”

‘The shock of the son’s dreadful end the mother did not long survive, and, returned to my native place, I am alone in the world. The influence of this solitude, perhaps, it was that gave the better side of my nature play again.

‘However this may be, it has once or twice crossed my mind to send you these leaves. Yesterday I think I should have done so, but, as the Fates willed it, I chanced to read in our English paper here that your long-delayed marriage had been at length accomplished on Monday last. My hatred burns again at the thought; it overwhelms every other feeling, and I am determined.

‘Secured in this same sheet of paper on which I write, I will wear about me Ernest’s last words until I die. If they ever reach you, it will be when I am past all feeling, and it will signify nothing to me that your remorse is abated.

PAULINE IMHAÜSLI.’

Odd Pages torn from the Diaries of Ernest Imhaüsli.

‘ Aug. 10, 1856.

‘ There is no doubt of it—she evokes feelings in my heart to which it has hitherto been a stranger. A whole evening in her society has convinced me of this.’

‘ Sept. 7, 1856.

‘ I begin at least to hope her thoughts are not pre-occupied; if so, there is a clear field. I should have thought she would have been just the girl Gerald would have chosen to make his wife. She has all the charms he professes to extol in women. Her position accords with his; everything points to it as being what they call in this country a desirable match; and yet I cannot trace any appearance of a bond between them. Besides, I think he would tell me if there were—but I shall watch.’

‘ April 6, 1857.

‘ The closest observation fails to show me that there is any suitor for her hand. Hosts congregate around her, and no wonder—for, O, is she not lovely? Yet she seems to single out none, least of all Gerald, whom I have figured so often as my most probable rival. To-night, after six months of the closest attention, I still believe he is indifferent to her. She absolutely treats him at times with disdain. Once or twice I have suspected that he inclines towards her; I have caught him with his eyes bent curiously upon her; but I suppose it meant nothing. My jealousy alone inspired the suspicion and the dread.’

‘Oct. 12, 1857.

‘I have abandoned myself entirely to thoughts of her. Never out of my mind, I incline to the belief that never was woman so loved by man before. Henceforward, I devote myself to the attainment of a position which shall warrant me in asking for her as a wife; but until that is achieved or approached I must disguise my feelings, or I may be debarred from her acquaintance.’

Here follows a series of extracts for a whole year, much to the same effect. On September the 29th, 1858, the entry stands thus :

‘Quarter-day.

‘A rise in the office at last! But what is it? Bah! a drop in the ocean. Forty pounds a year, which makes my income 180*l*. I might as well ask for the hand of a princess of the blood as for that of this woman, upon whom I have centred my whole soul! My only hope lies in the still-continued absence of any definite lover; but this cannot continue much longer. Some day I shall be struck dumb by the news that she is to be married. Dumb, do I say?—dead, more likely. At times it is with the greatest difficulty I can control my feelings.’

‘March 25, 1859.

‘Six months since my salary was raised. In twelve more, perhaps, my income may reach 200*l*. or 220*l*. The prospect is hopeless! Had I but some capital, I might look forward to trading on my own account. I

have knowledge sufficient, and could see my way. But with this miserable routine, I shall be an old man ere I have a chance of marrying, and the only woman I ever would marry will, long before that time, have passed out of my reach. I grow desperate as I think of it. I refrain from going too often into society where I may meet her, lest I should commit some hideous folly. Yet I must be near her; and so I watch and skulk about in the neighbourhood of the house like a thief. Gerald is oftener there, and for this even I have become furiously jealous of him.'

'June 17, 1859.

'Were it not that I am sure Gerald would have told me, I could have sworn there is now some clandestine understanding between them. At the picnic to-day he hardly left her side, and as I saw them whispering, I felt half out of mind. I think at that moment, had I been certain there was meaning in his manner, I could have struck him to the ground.

'A strange sensation of enmity begins to battle with my friendship for him; for if it be not he, there is still no one else in the field.'

'Aug. 21, 1859.

'I have almost determined to accept the consequences, and ask her to be my wife. The consequences? Simply, that I should be forbidden the house. The daughters of the English merchant-princes are expected to marry into this same nobility. A father with twenty or thirty thousand a year expects a son-in-law with at least a fourth of that income to start with. What chance

have I? Is not this a sufficient answer to any plea I could put forward?’

‘Aug. 29, 1859.

‘This volunteering is a diversion; it has somewhat roused me from my melancholy. I like the drill, and anticipate pleasure from the shooting.’

‘Sept. 20, 1859.

‘The rifles were served out to-day—a glorious weapon! I enjoy handling it. I have not had a firearm in my hand since I was a boy.’

‘Oct. 10, 1859.

‘A large muster of the corps to-day. She came to see us, and my ardour for the drill was diminished. I could hear nothing, I could see nothing. I could understand no word of command, I behaved like a fool or one possessed. How does a man feel, I wonder, when he begins to go mad? Does he ever think of destroying those he holds dearest?’

‘Oct. 24, 1859.

‘It has come—and I have been right throughout! My shadowy dread is realised. She *is* engaged, and to Gerald!

‘He told me this afternoon—*he*, my friend, whose life I twice saved—saved, that he might blight mine. What a mystery is Fate! But it is quite certain we cannot both live now. He or I must depart. I think I hid my feelings from him, and I will to the end, whatever form that may take. . . . And Pauline has *loved him!* She confessed this when I spoke of his

marriage. He must die—as surely as I saved him, so surely will I now destroy him.’

‘Nov. 2, 1859.

‘For more than a week I have deliberated upon the “how” and the “when.” We are wonderful beings; unable, in spite of ourselves, to grasp ideas in their true bearing: impulse obscures reason and judgment both.

‘I am calmer now; let me try to write what I mean.

‘I desire to make him suffer. Good! I almost lose sight of my love for her in this desire, and yet I have thought of *killing* him. The very means by which I render suffering impossible for him! Men only suffer whilst they live. Now I have suffered long enough. I am the person to die; therefore *he* must kill *me*, not *I him*. Then, for ten, twenty, thirty, forty years, he lives on in agony—unparalleled overwhelming agony. But that he may experience the full extent of it he must never know that *I design* and *devise* this punishment for him. He must suppose that he has brought it upon himself; that he has killed his friend, his “dearest friend and preserver” (I laugh as I pen these words), by an accident—an accident arising from some egregious folly of his own, to which *I* will tempt him, as opportunity may offer. And for the opportunity? I look to find it in our practising with these rifles. Blank cartridge will be served out shortly: if I can load the piece with one, and add a bullet unseen, . . . or possess myself of a ball-cartridge before we are intrusted with them, and so disarm suspicion?—for this

is most essential to my plan. Yes. As Iago says,
“'Tis engendered, but yet confused.”’

‘Nov. 7, 1859.

‘My only fear is, that I shall not have patience. I shall be tempted to slay him some day before I can carry out my plan. As I hear him speak of the 1st of December I almost betray myself.’

‘Nov. 23, 1859, 2 P.M.

‘The cartridges, this afternoon, at a parade! I await my opportunity. Give me patience, Destiny! The danger will arise when I have loaded the piece. The temptation to shoot him whilst the weapon is in my hand may prove too great after all. Give me patience, O Reason!

‘If these be the last words I ever write, remember, my sister (for it is into your hands they will fall; I have arranged for that), that they are for your eye only, written that you may know the truth, and so long as you keep it from him your revenge, as well as mine, will be accomplished. You and I are too much of one mind for any doubts as to my future to disturb you. Adieu!

ERNEST.’

It has been but a sad satisfaction, the eventual discovery of this truth; for it has but shown me to have been the dupe of one who was, perhaps, hardly responsible for his acts. We must, at least, hope he was not; and that that Reason which thinkers such as he magnify into a divinity was in reality, in his case, tottering on her throne.


LONDON LANDSCAPE.

‘I HAVE often amused myself with thinking how different a place London is to different people. They whose narrow minds are contracted to the consideration of some one particular pursuit view it only through that medium. A politician thinks of it merely as the seat of Government in its different departments ; a grazier, as a vast market for cattle ; a mercantile man, as a place where a prodigious deal of business is done upon ‘Change ; a dramatic enthusiast, as the grand scene of theatrical entertainments ; a man of pleasure, as an assemblage of taverns, &c. &c. ; but the intellectual man is struck with it as comprehending the whole of human life in all its variety, the contemplation of which is inexhaustible.’

So wrote Boswell, and had he possessed a keen sense of the picturesque, or been in any way a dabbler with brushes and colours, he would have added a clause respecting artists, and the way in which this class of the community would be struck by the aspect of London from a pictorial point of view. To them he might have said it affords a vast field on which to exercise their powers, not only as a school where every emotion of

which the human breast is susceptible may be studied, but as a mine of wealth for that section of the brethren of the brush that deals with the objective rather than with subjective beauties—for those whose habit it is to portray the ever-varying effects pervading earth, air, and water, and who are called ‘landscape painters.’

In the days, however, of the celebrated biographer your artist did not excite great attention : he did not, with some few honourable exceptions, count for much in general society, and to this, in some degree, may be attributed the omission by Boswell of all reference to the way in which London would represent itself to him. A hundred years ago, landscape-painting, although cultivated by some few gifted men, did not excite the same popular and universal interest that it has since done. There were no water-colour exhibitions, and the facilities for travelling being so limited, but little stimulus was given even to a thought of the pursuit. Sketching from Nature was not then looked upon as a necessary part of every liberal curriculum for education. Young ladies and gentlemen did not rush off to this or that accomplished professor of drawing for ‘lessons’ at a guinea an hour, in the weak-minded and preposterous hope of being taught to make pictures, like puddings, by recipe. Boswell could scarcely, therefore, have been expected, fond as he was of the town, to have added to the catalogue of its attractions the fact that it was one of the finest spots in which the sketcher from Nature could take up his quarters, and he would have been as much surprised to hear it as, doubtless, will be




many of the aforesaid young ladies and gentlemen in the present year of grace.

To them, and to all those who have been bitten by the *cacoëthes pingendi*, as it may be called, and who have been stimulated to a sort of superficial pursuit of and love for art, merely by the exhibition of clever water-colour drawings, or by the desire to bring home a portfolio of sketches from every excursion made at home or abroad, and who think that sketching from Nature is only to be practised in fine weather and in beautiful scenery, the announcement may, indeed, appear startling. To tell such fair-weather painters that London, with all its bustle, noise, smoke, mud, and dirt, is a magnificent place, in a picturesque sense, 'to go to,' as the artists would say, is probably to tell them what they will not believe; but no one will gainsay the fact who regards art as a noble and difficult pursuit, and 'not,' as Mr. Ruskin says, 'merely as a mode of graceful recreation or a new resource for times of rest.' No one who goes through the world with his eyes open, and is on the look-out for beauty, be it where it may, and is sensible to the charms of form, light and shade, and colour, can traverse the mighty Babylon without constantly being struck by its landscape-like capabilities. Such an observer, who, being an artist, must likewise be an intellectual man, will probably find the outward attractions of the scene rendered more impressive under some aspects by the inner consciousness that "London" comprehends the whole of human life in all its variety, the contemplation of which is inex-

haustible.' He who would see that which constitutes London's exclusive beauty should follow the great highway of the Thames, or take his stand upon its now grandly solid banks, or climb the well-known 'shot-tower' by Waterloo-bridge, to survey thence the city, which is the very core of a great country, the heart, as it were, from which all pulsations ebb and flow, and each extremity of the empire draws its life-blood. Such a prospect as this can but impress the spectator, be he who he may. There is food for thought for the man who looks on London from the neighbourhood of the Thames, be he painter or poet, patriot or philosopher. It is, however, with the first of these that we have to do; but he is little worthy of the painter's craft who is not poet, patriot, and philosopher too.

Assuredly, the landscape owes, as we have said, not a little of its impressiveness to the fact that it is to a great extent artificial—the work of man's hand. The sky and river are of God's making; but all else is the result of human labour, guided and governed by His providence. Note these myriad housetops, these spires, steeples, and towers, these palaces, prisons, theatres, churches, streets, and reflect upon their intimate connection with millions of human lives. Human effort called them into existence; since then they have formed the arena within which is acted the great drama of life. Each building, each roof-tree, has a dozen tales to tell—endless tales, repeating themselves, of joys and sorrows, hopes and fears, of high endeavours, great aims, *strong* passions, bitter disappointment, and death.



Even now, as you gaze, the pageant is in progress. The painter seizes on the lines of beauty, the lights and shadows of the picture before him ; but he cannot employ his pencil upon it without deeply pondering upon that which is unseen in its endless perspective. He needs no lame-legged Asmodeus to shift the roofs and lay bare the secrets of each house. There is nothing new under the sun. What people did last year, and the year before, and so back to remotest antiquity, they are doing now—now, as he studies delightedly the external appearance of this vast human ant-heap, the home of busy millions.

‘ They, whose narrow minds are contracted to the consideration of some one particular pursuit, view it only through that medium ;’ but the artist is not one of these, as we have endeavoured to hint, and as Boswell would have been fain to confess had he thought of mentioning him. Even now, while he sits down to make his sketch, or take his notes of transient and varying effects of sun-gleam or cloud-shadows, the influence of all that London is must be upon him—he must feel the story which he has to tell—he must be conscious of all the stage business and directions, or the scene which he is about to realise for the background of the drama will but feebly represent the London landscape.

Watch him, therefore ; but more than ever watch the subject-matter with which he is about to deal. There is nothing monotonous in this brick-built artificial landscape ; Nature has bent the will and hand of

man to her object, and has compelled him, in his search after the useful, to furnish her unconsciously with the materials for stage effects on the grandest scale. In gratitude to man for that which he has contributed to the exhibition, she pours over all the rich halo of atmospheric effect. Even in this she does not disdain his further aid. Catching up and collecting the smoke that rises from innumerable hearths and furnaces, the homes of human industry and human habitation, she twists it into usefulness, mellowing with it the harsh distance, softening the crude uninteresting outlines, and toning down the brightness of the sun's disc, till it hangs behind the misty curtain like a blood-red fiery ball which threatens all the heavens with conflagration. At all hours and in all aspects there is plenty of work for the painter here. The subjects are endless, and they have been multiplied a thousandfold by the originators of the Thames Embankment. For this grand granite wall serves more than its ostensible purpose—the utilisation of the river reaches. It is more than a footway stolen from the treacherous mud; it supplies the stand-point whence the marvellous effects upon the river may be observed at leisure. No longer has the sketcher to emulate the mudlarks who dredge for half-pence beneath the slime. Secure upon the embankment, he can linger by the hour while the yellowing river runs by with rapid stream, and the shadows alter and deepen, and the scene shifts as he gazes. Mark the bridges: this one with graceful airy span; that *grotesque*, but massive, with granite buttresses, that

seem to sneer at the puny efforts of the headstrong current. Mark the Houses of Parliament, Somerset House, and the Temple, as the heavy rain-clouds pass away, leaving the western sky illumined with the opal tints of such a sunset as that which flows behind the 'Fighting Temeraire' of Turner; transfer to paper, if you can, their splendid outlines, confessing that there are 'things of beauty' in poor, tame, old London not dreamed of hitherto in your philosophy. For the sketcher, indeed, there is a mine of wealth about the Thames; but he who digs must have courage to face the incisive 'chaff' of the street cads, and must bear to be jostled by crowds of curious wondering citizens. Upon either shore, Middlesex or Surrey, there are countless studies: here, great barges, with broad yellow or tan-dried sails, and old jetties; there, forlorn wharves, disused cranes, rotten posts, floating baulks of timber lashed together, like impromptu rafts, with near or distant peeps of tower and spire; whilst St. Paul's is for ever rearing its stately dome in odd and various, but always picturesque and grand, combinations.

Below bridge there is no decline of interest, but rather the reverse, for the painter, for the shipping now forms an additional attraction. The interminable forest of masts, in itself a sight to be witnessed at no other port in the world, and rising from craft of infinite variety, swarming in from every quarter of the globe, mingles in such glorious harmony with the other features of the scene, as to give inspiration to the dullest

tyro in the art. Unsavoury Billingsgate, unromantic blocks of warehouses, stores, new and old, alongside of crazy water-side cabins with bulging windows, dock entrances, sluice-gates, and the host of commonplace adjuncts to the picture, all become quite paintable, looked at with the proper spirit, and treated at the right hour, and under the right effect, by a skilful hand. Then, again, the Tower of London, with all its old historical associations, will not pass unnoticed by the sketcher, disfigured though much of its *entourage* may be by the exigencies of commerce. Many other less important, but not less picturesque, items will come into view as we float down 'the silent highway,' until the domes of Greenwich Hospital, crowned by the woody knolls of the Park, bring us into the broadening reaches of the Woolwich, Plumstead, and Essex marshes. Here still there is no cessation of available stuff, altered though it be somewhat in character. Now the long stretches of mud-banks, greasy and desolate, staked through and through with blackening piles, have yet a certain beauty of their own—a beauty intensified when the rime of a white frost silvers the great beams of timber that lie about like amphibious monsters, partly on shore, partly in the dull still water; while through the cold mists of a winter's morning loom mighty ships, coming up with the tide, in full sail or following submissively, as a blind man does his dog, their busy, barking, consequential steam-tugs.

Hardy and athletic, however, must be our limner who would gather in a harvest from such localities and

under such effects. But not the less fruitful is the district because it may be difficult to reach and to study in. Such men as Turner, Stanfield, Duncan, and the rest, have given sufficient proof of this, and their prowess has been often exercised to its best advantage. All about these windings of the Thames, and 'Against Wind and Tide, off Tilbury Fort,' they have striven to extract gold from mud and ooze. Queen Elizabeth's primitive fortification perhaps is beyond the limit of our 'London landscape' proper, but having touched it, we will put about and range our cockney stream within a compass more easily got at, encumbered as we are by sketch-book and camp-stool.

Ascending, then, from Westminster, let us think what might be done, and what has been done, with Lambeth Palace, Chelsea Hospital, Cheyne Walk, the old church and bridge; and so, working up the stream and looking back, that distant views of the great city may enter into our collection of London landscapes, of which the foregrounds, though still of shore and post and barge, are yet of a character less wild and desolate than those obtained at the other extremity of the watery way.

Tempted to press against the current by the sun, which, rising through the indigenous haze, casts a touch of the magician's light upon the earth and sky, gilding with brightness the high lights and scattering rosy streaks among the quivering reflections, we pass Putney, reaching Richmond—and even perhaps palatial Windsor itself—without in spirit going much beyond

the London radius. Or, if we do for a moment, shall we not find our excuse (while treating of London landscape) in the exquisite beauty of the banks wooded to the water's edge, in the drooping boughs that sweep the surface with their foliage?—in the quaint, old-fashioned, river-side residences, built out upon picturesque timbers, and the rustic inn that speaks of comfort and good ale?

Verily! But grateful as are the sights and sounds of the rural suburbs into which we have strayed, it must be remembered that soft green grass, jewelled with daisies, tall trees, now garbed in graceful foliage, now stretching gaunt bare arms to the pitiless winter sky, as if appealing for the lives of the remnant of their offspring, the last few withered, yellow, unlovely leaves, are to be found in the very centre of our great wilderness of brick and mortar. Return we, therefore, to the smoke and noise, only to escape again from it by one stride, as it were, by plunging from the bustle of Oxford-street or Piccadilly into the recesses of Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens. Will any landscape-painter, then, deny that he has under his hand sufficient material out of which to fabricate rural woodland scenes, which, for marked character, could not be excelled had he wandered into the depths of Sherwood? Our parks—the mere existence of which in the midst of the capital of the world is not less remarkable than that of the mythical toad entombed alive in the stratified rocks of the past—present a most conspicuous feature in London landscape, and, in addition to their

indigenous beauty, give an opportunity for combining silvan with architectural details, most noteworthy and valuable. The way in which the tall or the stunted and gnarled elms mingle with each other, or with peeps of minster or of palace-tower, antique gables, buttresses, tall chimneys, spires, cupolas, and high roofs, is highly characteristic and original, the over-bronzed tone of the foliage, and the subdued green which the smoky atmosphere lends to them, in no way militating against their pictorial utility, but rather aiding it. Effects at sundown, twilight, or moonlight, observable in those of the metropolitan districts where herbage and trees abound, oftentimes vie in suggestiveness and mysterious grandeur with anything that has been seen on canvas. Even the artificial waters at such times assume a value to the painter, reflection-wise and otherwise, equal to that which he can get from mountain tarn or rural river. Sights are to be seen by the Serpentine, and by the lake in St. James's Park, sufficient to occupy the artist's attention constantly, and to the end of his days.

If they are passed or missed, or but half observed or undervalued, it can be only because familiarity has deadened the appreciative sense; and we know that constant proximity to, and residence amongst, beautiful objects leads often to a depreciation of their worth. But the sketcher from Nature, artist or amateur, who has from time to time gone forth, far a-field it may be, in search of subjects on which to exercise his skill, must perpetually have experienced the difficulty of knowing

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... landscapes which cannot
... the neighbourhood of most
... it is generally admitted that, for
... of English beauty, the suburbs and
... of London are hard to beat. Take all the
... land round about it, with the shelving slopes
... constitute the valley of the Thames, and those
... which trend away to the more open country; remember
... the green lanes and pleasant patches of common, wood,
... and water on every side; remember Hampstead Heath,
... Muswell Hill, Hornsey, and the flatter ground
... and Tottenham; do not forget the rural,
... valley through which the river Lea creeps

...
...
... of Hyging

and Hainault. Crossing the Thames, note well the capabilities of Shooter's Hill, Woolwich Common, Eltham, Blackheath, and above all, Greenwich Park, which, with its avenues of chestnut-trees, Scotch firs, and precipitous turf-clad hillocks, supplies, with the distant peeps of city and suburb, exhaustless compositions, in which the artist may revel for a lifetime. Take all these points, and bearing southwards and westwards, observe such spots as Dulwich, Sydenham, Norwood, Croydon, Tooting, Wimbledon, Harrow, Willesden, Neasdon, and the rest of the well-known metropolitan neighbourhoods ;—take all these, we repeat, into consideration, and then say (cockney villas and the general inroads of brick and mortar notwithstanding) whether London and its surroundings do not yield a wealth of landscape peculiarly their own. The busiest thoroughfares themselves even, under some aspects and treated with a strong feeling for light and shade and colour, rather than for rigid accuracy of form and clear-cut outlines—ay, and at the most crowded time of day too—have, to our knowledge, been rendered on paper in a David Cox-like blotty manner, with so much power as to set any sketcher longing 'to go to London' for the pursuance of his darling occupation. From shop-windows, at points of vantage-ground obtainable at angles in corner houses all along the great highways—Cornhill, Cheapside, St. Paul's Churchyard, Ludgate, Fleet-street, Strand, Whitehall, Westminster, Pall Mall, Piccadilly, &c.—peeps have been got, having in them elements of 'the rarest picturesque.' Omnibuses, han-

som cabs, and our unpromising civilian garb, have been made, and may be made, subservient to the requirements of art, and most fitly, to illustrate the life inseparable from London landscape. Saying nothing of a thousand byways and quaint nooks, opened out by demolitions, deserted churches, old inn-yards, out-of-the-way courts and alleys, old corners with dingy trees and bits of scrubby herbage, intermixed with antique gables, relics of cloisters, &c., which, by diligent searching, are still discoverable, and which are worth the looking for by the sketcher who cares for such material,—it will surely be conceded that a painter will do well ‘to go to London,’ in the artistic sense of the expression, at least once during his career, to give it a place amongst the other picturesque towns which have attracted him. Doubtless it requires its own peculiar treatment. It would be undesirable, except in some few instances, to give prominence to many architectural forms and details. Minute reproductions, such as the artist would strive for in the old Italian or Spanish cities, of course would not be thought of; nay, the utmost use of the indigenous atmosphere must be made to hide and subdue much that is hideous and unseemly. And as the brilliant skies of Florence—so essentially one of its characteristics—there readily illumine all that is most valuable, so the murky gloom prevalent in the English metropolis conceals or modifies what is *not* wanted, and could not be dispensed with without loss of truth.

As a good portrait-painter strives to portray the

leading sentiment or character of his sitter, 'to give,' as it has been aptly put, 'an expression which shall exhibit the entire and enduring character, not the casual predominance of any one temporary feeling,' so no artist would think of representing London under the clear and smokeless atmosphere of Italy (supposing even transient moments of such an abnormal beauty to exist), any more than he would Venice under leaden clouds or yellow fog.

The skies of London and Venice are both right in their place, and are in keeping with the buildings they overhang. They are equally treatable on canvas or paper; and if the Adriatic has, in the eyes of the artist, prior claims to those of the Thames, there is still no reason why these latter should be overlooked entirely, and it is, after all, mainly in the neighbourhood of the Thames, if not actually on its banks, that the 'London' landscape-painter should look for his most telling themes. Charles Dickens, in *No Thoroughfare*, describes a rotten broken-down old landing-place under the name of 'Break-neck Stairs,' as a 'slimy little causeway which had dropped into the river by a slow process of suicide, and two or three stumps of piles and a rusty iron mooring-ring were all that remained of the departed break-neck glories.' Further on he says: 'Through three-fourths of its rising tides the dirty indecorous drab of a river would come solitarily oozing and lapping at the rusty ring, as if it had heard of the Doge and the Adriatic, and wanted to be married to the great conservator of its filthiness, the Right Honour-

able the Lord Mayor !' Notwithstanding this highly humorous and satirically truthful description of much that is characteristic of the metropolitan windings of the stream, and unpromising as it sounds pictorially, we could point to a host of clever pictures dealing entirely with such materials. Some of the works (many of which must be fresh in the memory of all visitors to exhibitions) of David Roberts, R.A., James Holland, Whistler, Beverly, Hemy, Dawson, Boyce, and Arthur Severn have been admirable examples of what may be done with 'the dirty indecorous drab of a river.' The last-named artist, especially, has made good capital out of it. His treatment of London landscape is earning much reputation for him, and his many views from and of the Embankment, and notably one from the 'Shot Tower,' will not be easily forgotten. Indeed, most of our artists who, like himself, deal with river and with city scenes, always show to quite as much advantage on the Thames as upon the Tiber, the Arno, the Rhine, the Danube, or the Lagunes of Venice.

Pause, therefore, all ye dabblers, artists or amateurs, who have not yet tried your hands on 'London landscape,' and before you decide that it is necessary to rush off north, south, east, or west in search of subjects, be quite sure that the very things you want do not lie close under your hand.

THE MESSAGE OF THE HOUR.

A LONG, low, dreary stretch of sandy coast facing to the east ; a bay, the shore of which, at its southern extremity, some ten miles off, rises so slightly from the horizon, where it meets the sea, that none but the keenest-sighted can pronounce where water ends and land begins. Two disused and much-dilapidated wooden lighthouses—one far out amidst the waves, the other high and dry upon the loose and dusty sand. A ruined causeway, linking the weird and ghostly sentinels together, appearing, when the tide is out, like some huge bruised and mangled monster of the deep, lying stranded, prone, and helpless, and, when the waters flow, marking its presence by the thin white line of angry surf which beats upon its ridge. All around dotted with a few scattered, stunted, weather-beaten trees ; a dead level of marshy country, broken towards the north, here and there, by knolls and mounds, covered by a scanty, reed-like, rank grass. These, by degrees, merge into a steepish bluff or headland, running right out to sea. Here a mile-long breakwater, with a beacon at the point, completes the bay, and artificially assists the protection which the cliff affords upon its other

side to a town, and harbour formed by a river's mouth, still farther north.

A little seaport town, with odd jetties, buoys, and landmarks; quaint gable-ended roofs, flagstaffs, a church with tower and spire; and a huge, round, dumpy, brand-new, white lighthouse; old-fashioned deserted streets, straggling down to the quay or out on to the scantily-wooded land lying between the river and the bay. As 'stale, flat, and unprofitable' a looking district as might be seen in many a day's march. With all the adjuncts of midsummer, bright skies, smooth seas, and gentle breezes, the aspect of the scene, enlivened though it might be by the glistening sails of the few craft frequenting the port, would, at the best, be tame. But in the depth of winter, under a canopy of leaden clouds, with the sulky moaning of the surge mingling with the mournful wail of a gusty chilly wind, the prospect of those dreary sands, stretching away for miles, would indeed be uninviting.

Yet to such a locality, far north upon our eastern coast, Fate ordained that I should be attracted one bleak December, and that there upon that lonely waste should be passed a Christmas-eve—to me the most memorable of all the fifty-six that I have journeyed by. Clearly it could not have been for change of scene or for the sake of a pleasant country ramble that I had elected to travel many weary miles to such an uninteresting bourn. No, indeed! it was a far more potent spell which drew me to the place than any thought of holiday or pleasure *to be gained from such outer things as scenery and*

healthful breezes. For me, this desolate patch of coast, when I reached it late at night, two days before Christmas that eventful year, was a paradise, a very Eden, far exceeding in attraction all other spots on earth to me; and even when, two days later, I knew my fate, the very desolation and wildness that surrounded me seemed so to harmonise with my mood, and to reflect the dismal prospects of my life, that I scarce think I would have exchanged them for the most genial of climes and scenes. Anything joyful, bright, and happy, could but have mocked me, and jarred upon a mind utterly cast down and miserably desponding.

Needless almost to say that it was a woman's presence that hallowed the ground, and that it was a woman who wrought my subsequent agony. She never loved me! I knew that afterwards, and perhaps it was my fault, not hers, that I mistook, in my sanguine way, the meaning of her words.

'If, six months hence,' she had said to me, 'we should by chance meet again, I think you would find my feelings and ideas about you quite unchanged—and, if unchanged in that time, quite unchangeable.'

We had met in London, where she had been on a visit to some friends, early in the year. I loved her from the first moment I saw her; and it was hard to refrain, when the time came for her return home, from uttering one word of what was in my heart! Yet my position was such that I dared not speak quite openly, so much had to be considered first. Ah! but for that hesitation! Had I but then spoken, and at

once, who knows how differently things might have fallen out! Still, I pushed the expressions of friendship to their utmost limit. She had responded, as I thought, as far as maiden modesty might allow, and the words I have quoted, which she used when she said 'Good-bye!' were in reply to something uttered by me, which she interpreted merely in this same spirit of friendship. Perhaps I hoped to convey more to her mind by them, and from her response imagined that I had done so. My feelings towards her only became intensified when she had returned to her quiet home in the out-of-the-way little seaport town on the eastern coast.

All my energies were now devoted to effect, as speedily as possible, such a change in my worldly position as should allow me honestly to ask her to become my wife. An unlooked-for stroke of fortune brought this about more rapidly than I could have hoped, and a month before Christmas I saw my way to the accomplishment of my most cherished wishes. Of course, we had not corresponded (although I did possess a treasured scrap of her handwriting—a note she sent me, on returning a book I had lent). The terms on which we parted afforded no plea for correspondence, but be sure I did not fail to learn all I prudently could about her from the common friends at whose house we first met. What I heard augured well, and so I decided that when the leisure which Christmas would afford me arrived (and what better season for inspiring hope?), I would go down and urge my suit. And this is how I came to be upon that bleak and barren shore at Christmas-time.

Night had set in before the coach which travelled from the nearest railway station, more than twenty miles away, stopped at the door of the chief inn of that little seaport town. It was an old-fashioned house—old-fashioned in every detail; otherwise I might not have observed in a corner of one of the passages, as I was being shown to my room, some artist's modern sketching apparatus—a camp-stool, portable easel, haversack, and so forth. The contrast which these objects offered to the place and time of year struck me, and I remembered afterwards (as how could I fail to do everything that happened at that eventful time?) thinking that it was a strange season for a brother of the brush to be campaigning.

Well, early next morning, the morning of Christmas-eve, full of hope and confidence, yet with the direst trepidation, I sought out the abode of the woman who was all in all to me. It is no part of my purpose to dwell upon what immediately followed. The result is what chiefly concerns those who listen to my story. The elderly maiden relative, with whom she lived, was from home when I was ushered in, and our meeting, therefore, was uninterrupted. My pen fails me as I approach the record of the way in which the interview terminated. I can do little more than say that I believe it caused her, in her bewilderment at my unexpected appearance, and at the words with which I was laden, almost as much pain to utter the fatal 'No' as it did me to hear it. 'Could she have known,' she said, 'of this, could she have interpreted our acquaint-

ance rightly, could she have thought that all my expressions of friendship were but the mask of something deeper . . . but for my long silence . . . As it was, I must forget her, for both our sakes—this was the only hope left; for pity's sake I must leave her—leave her at once!' She was so moved, and it cost her such an effort, I could see, to speak thus firmly, that I felt it would be unmanly to distress her further. Mysterious as were her words and manner, and gladly as I would have known more, I dared not trust myself to prolong my stay in her presence, and, in a fit of wild despair and madness, I rushed from the house and hurried away I knew not whither; nor do I now, glancing back, remember when I first became conscious of being out far away upon that inhospitable-looking shore.

I must have walked many miles, for the short winter's day was on the wane. The weather had been quiet, and, though dull and gray, very mild for the time of year. But now, as my paroxysms of grief became more intermittent, I observed (for I had always the habit of watching such things) that the wind had changed, was rising rapidly, and from the eastern or seaward quarter. It was getting much colder; the tide, too, was coming in, as its ominous roar and the increasing surf clearly indicated. There would be a wild night, and, though I felt indifferent whither I went, instinctively I turned round and bent my steps back towards the town.

Moodily trudging along, revolving my misfortune and

all connected with it, cursing my want of promptitude, speculating as to what my chances might have been had I had the courage to have spoken earlier, or only even to have written—yes, to have written—that, perhaps, might have saved me;—moodily, I say, trudging along, I was aroused from my preoccupation by what I thought was a distant shout. Looking up, I saw, far away towards where the headland first began to rise in the curve of the bay, a little knot of people. They were standing near the ruined lighthouse on the sand, and, as I approached, they appeared to be making signals and hallooing to somebody who must have been close to or upon the second lighthouse out in the sea, at the end of the broken causeway, against which the incoming waves were already beginning to break into clouds of spray. I hurried forward, feeling sure there was danger impending, and in my then mood the prospect of anything like active participation in it seemed to offer peculiar attractions. The loose sand on which the flowing tide was now fast driving me as I walked considerably impeded my progress, and thus it was that I had time fully to take in the wild scene around.

Desolate to a degree, as I have described it, the increasing fury of the elements now lent it additional gloom and awe. A heavy gale had set in with marvellous rapidity, blowing dead on shore; ragged, drifting clouds, the precursors of the storm-laden battalions to follow, were hurrying across the heavens. The spray from the breakers, which the level shore multiplied into an almost unbroken field of white foam, became min-

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gled with large drops of rain as it was whirled far across the land, and the dim line of the rising headland in the extreme distance merged into the colour of the background. Close upon me, some two hundred yards apart, were the two lighthouses, standing out white, gaunt, and spectre-like from the dark leaden-toned masses of cloud now enveloping the whole prospect like a pall.

Coming up at last with the little group of people, who had all the while been shouting and gesticulating, I found they were endeavouring, by their signals and beckonings, to induce a man who was standing on the yet uncovered stonework at the base of the seaward lighthouse, and clinging to one of the piles upon which the structure itself was lifted high into the air, to come forward towards the shore. Evidently he feared to do this, for, although the causeway connecting the two buildings would, in its unruined state, have enabled him to reach the land in perfect safety, it was so sunk and destroyed in parts, especially at one spot near the middle, that the waves had already made a clean sweep across it, and were every moment with the rising tide isolating more and more the lighthouse where he stood.

'I'd 'low he'll ha' to bide there all night if he don't come through it at once,' said a very old weather-beaten seafaring man, who, with a young lad and three women, made up the group.

'Lor' bless my dear heart alive! Why, he might ha' comed a dozen times, if he'd ha' watched his chance, since I first made 'un see me. Come on with ye! Now, now! Now's your time,' shrieked the old

fellow, as he waved his arms frantically, and as for half a minute the surge retired, and left the causeway, even at its lowest part, quite exposed. But the opportunity was missed; the terror-stricken man seemed blind to it until it was too late, and only attempted to leave his hold just as, in another second, the raging billows were again mounting with overwhelming force and depth the breach in the masonry. He had barely time again to seize his support ere a larger wave than any that had yet rolled in dashed across the ledge on which he stood, and would have swept him into the sea had he not at that moment regained his hold.

‘He’ll not ha’ another like that,’ muttered the old salt, half to himself and half to me; ‘and I’d ’low he’d better swarm up into the old lantern-room as soon as may be if he don’t want to get drowned.’

‘In God’s name,’ I exclaimed, ‘how came he to be there, or how was it he stayed until the tide was so high?’

‘Well, I ’spect he was a-makin’ a draught o’ this here old ancient light on the shore, don’t you see? He’s been about here these many months past, draught-in’ all sorts o’ things, the boats and shipping in the harbour, and suchlike. I met ’un comin’ along the sands this mornin’; and half an hour ago, when I was lookin’ out o’ the door o’ my cabin, I seed ’un out yonder, scared and bewildered-like, tryin’ to get ashore. He could ha’ done it easy then, a’most dry-footed. So I beckoned; but I s’pose he didn’t comprehend, and, instead o’ comin’ for’ard, went back, and kept standin’ just as you seed ’un when you comed up.’

‘Where do you live, then?’ I inquired, for apparently there was no habitation near.

‘That’s my house, there, that little cabin up there. I’ve lived in it more nor forty year! I was chief light-keeper over twenty, when these ’ere lights was in use. Ye had to steer on the two straight, don’t ye see, when makin’ the harbour’s mouth? But when the sand shifted and the current changed, and they warn’t no more good, the Board let me stay on in the house, as a kind o’ pension like. This ’ere is my old ’ooman, and them’s my three grandchildren.’

Glancing round in the direction he pointed, I saw amongst the sand-hills a small cottage, looking at first almost like one of them; but my attention was instantly attracted from it by the renewed shouting and signalling of the old man.

‘Get up with ye! get up with ye!’ he cried. ‘If another o’ them catches ye it’ll be too much for ye, I reckon,’ another huge breaker having broken over the base of the lighthouse and for a moment hidden the luckless man there from our view.

‘He’ll be drowned, sure as Fate! Climb up with ye! climb up with ye! There’s a bit o’ the stair left just above your head.’

‘He can’t hear what you say,’ I said, ‘at that distance, and in the midst of this roaring wind and sea.’

‘No, and he don’t seem for to comprehend my signs neither.’

‘Would he be safe,’ I anxiously inquired, ‘if he got into the lantern-room, as you call it? Could he

stay there during the night, or until the tide went out again ?

‘ Bless your heart, yes ! I ha’ spent hundreds o’ nights there. He’d be safe enough so long as the place holds fast, but I’d ’low it won’t do so much longer. I’ve ’spected to see it carried away these two years past when it comes on to blow from the east’ard, as it’s doin’ now. But, Lor’ bless me ! it might stand ever so much longer. Ye never know how these things is ’fected when they once get out o’ repair. Howsomdever, I wouldn’t like to bide there to-night, and Christmas-eve of all nights in the year. It bean’t very lively out here in our little home, for there bean’t another livin’ soul ’cept ourselves within three miles off ; but it’s better than that old lantern-room ’ud be, anyhow. Still, if he don’t go up he’ll be drowned as sure as Fate afore our very eyes.’

‘ What a silly fellow !’ said I. ‘ Why, there—there was almost another chance for him again. I believe I could get out to him and bring him in, if I watched my time, even now.’

‘ Well, ye just might, and ye just might not. I’d ha’ fetched ’un myself when I first seed ’un if I’d been able to get about as I used ; but I be’s so crippled now, I dursn’t ha’ tried.’

‘ Then I’ll go ; I’m a strong swimmer. It will only be a good ducking if I do get washed away ;’ and I immediately began to pull off my coat.

‘ Nay, nay,’ cried the elder of the three women ; ‘ take my advice, sir, and don’t try it ; the surges is

awful strong. If ye lose your footing they'll beat your senses out upon the sand, or agin the stonework, in a minute.'

But I had made up my mind. I had become intensely excited. I could not deliberately stand there and see a fellow-creature perish before my eyes, and make no effort. He was evidently incapable, from fear, of helping himself. Besides, did it so much matter to me if the surges did knock my senses out? Was life at this time so peculiarly attractive that I should hesitate to risk it for the sake of another? Bah! the peril was especially enticing, and it was what I would in a cooler moment even have chosen as the fittest distraction for my thoughts. The danger was grateful to me, reckless and miserable as I felt.

Already my foot is on the beginning of the causeway. The little lad seems to applaud my determination, and brings a rope, which he wishes to tie round my waist; but I refuse this, and content myself with passing my arm through a loop of it, and casting it loosely over my shoulder. There is just now, however, such an access of wind and big seas, that the old man and the woman entreat me not to try; and, indeed, the prospect looks hopeless. Blinding sheets of spray sweep by, wetting us through and through. Daylight is waning, momentary glimpses only of the causeway are caught, the upper part of the lighthouse is all that is seen save sky and raging sea. Still I am determined; but I hope I never forget that my first object is to save another's life rather than to lose my own,

and this recollection steadies me and makes me cool and cautious.

‘He’s gone!’ cries the old man, shielding his eyes with his hand as he peers through the ever-thickening atmosphere, and as a temporary lull in the elements again reveals the base of the lighthouse.

‘He is not,’ say I; ‘hold fast on to the rope!’

And in another minute I am running down the causeway. Heaven be praised! a great back sweep of water has left it all but clear. I see the wretched man still clinging to the pile, and wisely, at last, he has climbed a little higher. I shall reach him yet; I am more than half-way and am scrambling across the deepest gap in the stonework, but it is so slippery from seaweed that I twice fall. The second time I have scarcely regained my legs ere an enormous wave overwhelms me, and I am tossed helpless as a cork. Swimmer-like though, I come head uppermost, and am carried back to the point almost whence I started. I cannot feel my feet, however; the rope has slipped off my shoulder, and the back sweep of the sea again takes me far out.

I have time to collect myself and to dive through the next huge breaker, coming safely out on the other side, and only a few yards from the lighthouse, against the supports of which I am suddenly lifted. I contrive to hold on to a piece of the broken stair. In another instant I have clambered into comparative safety; but, alas, I am the only occupant of the frail structure! The miserable man is nowhere to be seen;

he has lost his hold and been carried away. For several minutes, I believe, I cease to think; when—yes, there he is, on the crest of a wave, borne straight to me. One more effort. Cautiously descending as low as I dare, I am just in time to grasp his senseless body as it swirls by. My great natural strength is intensified to something all but superhuman, and I am enabled to lift my burden out of reach of the succeeding breaker. Immediately afterwards I have scrambled with it, I scarcely know how, up the slippery ruined ladder into the lantern-room, and laid it on the floor.

Dread position! One glance through the split and battered window of the room towards the shore shows me that it is quite hopeless to regain it. Even were the lighthouse not entirely cut off, and every vestige of the causeway hidden by the surf, the experience of the last ten minutes tells me that any attempt to carry the helpless form back will be fruitless. Yet what is to be done? Without assistance and restoratives the man will die; nay, perhaps he is already dead.

I am sure that the people on the shore saw me rescue him, for as I scaled the ladder they were waving their hats and handkerchiefs. Will they make any attempt to send me help? No; a moment's consideration shows me they cannot. Seven hours at least must elapse before the tide will ebb sufficiently for them to get at me. It is not nearly high water yet, and the tremendous wind will keep it up at least for an extra hour; by that time it will be midnight.

It is upon me, then, that my companion's life still depends; let me therefore look to his state at once. Kneeling down beside him, I soon discover that he is not dead; but he is so cold and drenched, and the shelter we have obtained affords so little protection from the drifting spray and rain now falling in torrents, that it is a question whether my most strenuous efforts can restore animation. Dripping wet and cold as I am, I shall have great difficulty in keeping up my own vitality for so long a time. Nevertheless, I do what I can. I get off his boots, and chafe his feet and hands. O, for a flask of spirits! And with the thought I feel in the pockets of his thick shooting-coat (of course I am without my own), and to my joy, in a breast one (which is luckily buttoned, or the flask had long since fallen out) is the thing I seek. I know it directly I touch it, and in my hurry to get at it I tear open the pocket. As I do so a small packet falls out upon the rickety floor. A rush of wind from the gap above our heads, where the old light had once burned, catches it, and sweeps it round and round the room two or three times, and I only save it from falling through a rent in the woodwork into the billows below by suddenly putting my foot upon it. Stooping then merely for an instant, just to pick it up, I see it is a small bundle of letters, some of them without their covers.

As my eyes chance to fall involuntarily upon the handwriting of the uppermost, I receive a shock which does more to bewilder and unnerve me even than my perilous situation, and all the exertion I have put forth

to save this man. I forget for the time his critical state, I forget where I am and what has happened; I can do nothing but glare at the paper I hold in my hand. Soddened, wet, and stained by sea-water as it has become, the characters upon it, despite the now rapidly-increasing darkness, are yet as clear to my preternaturally sharpened vision as if they were printed in the largest type.

Her handwriting! *her* words! which I cannot fail to see at a glance are those of endearment, of love, and addressed of a surety to the man now lying at my feet.

Such were my conflicting emotions, and so stupefied was I by the discovery, that I seemed to have no power to resist the temptation to verify my suspicions. My sense of honour was dulled, and intuitively I took out the letter from the bundle. The better to examine it, I went to the largest remaining semblance of a window in the leeward side of the room, to catch the few rays of daylight yet left. Impossible, needless, unwarrantable to reproduce her expressions. Impossible, certainly, to describe their effect on me. Gradually they wrought me to a pitch of feeling which I shudder to recall even after this lapse of time. To say that I am ashamed of what for a period was uppermost in my mind, is to say nothing. The latent 'Cain' which philosophers assert that there is in the heart of every human being, the devil which it requires only a peculiar combination of circumstances to arouse in us all sometimes, had absolute possession of me. Once entered on my dishonourable examination, I read more than

half the letters, and night only put a stop to my proceedings. Yet I had seen enough to show me that he had won her by outspoken devotion, to show me that she had only known him since her return from London, to show me that his chance had not been better than mine, had not, perhaps, been as good at first. Each sentence appeared to my then distempered brain but to increase and enforce the conviction that if I had but been prompt, that if I had but risked something, that if I had been less calculating, that if, in a word, I had had the courage to have given my true feelings words when I first knew her, she might have been mine. O, hideous and diabolical suggestion, that but for this man she might be so still !

My eyes seemed like balls of fire, as, driven by darkness from the contemplation of the fatal pages, I turned them back towards the spot where my rival lay. I felt no cold, no bodily discomfort, no sense of any danger, no consciousness of what I had gone through. I noted not the roaring of the waves beneath and all around me, nor the rushing tearing wind, and deluge of rain ; the swaying, quivering, and rocking of my frail shelter had no terrors for me. One only absorbing devilish thought was in my mind. I had but to abstain from any further effort to restore this man to life, and he would surely die. And I ?—Well, had I not done all and more than most men could have done ? The old man, the women, and the boy were witnesses of that. They saw me drag a *senseless body* from the waves ; they could not know that it was not a corpse.

No one could know that save myself. What strange coincidence, what wonderful destiny was this which had placed him in my power?

Did it not look as if it had been preordained that I should clear him from my path? that for this end I had been led to imperil my own life? Thus sophistically the demon of jealousy argued and tempted me; and I scarce know for how long I was under his sway, or for how long I hovered on the brink of this terrible abyss. Several times I knelt down and put my hand upon my intended victim's heart: it yet beat faintly, and again more faintly. I could not see him; but I knew he must die soon. And still I abstained from all further effort to restore him.

'They had seen me drag a senseless body from the waves,' I kept repeating; 'they could not know that it was not a corpse! No one could know that save myself.'

After long crouching beside him, I grew dizzy. There was a turmoil in my brain which paralysed my reason. The sounds of the increasing storm, the howling of the wind, the roaring of the waves, as their mounting crests now constantly struck my frail shelter, began to mingle in strange and ominous cadence with the words that were ringing through my thoughts. By degrees the tones all seemed to assume a different but a definite utterance, at first like a distant peal of bells, and then, drawing nearer, they changed to voices, and I fancied I heard them whispering in my ear. 'Christmas-eve!' they said, 'Christmas-eve! Merry Christmas,

with peace on earth and good-will towards men ! Look that you welcome it, see that you may !'

I know now that it was the mighty power from above speaking to me through the raging elements ; it was '*the message of the hour*,' and whenever I remember the mercy thus vouchsafed, my heart leaps up in thankfulness, even as it did in that one momentous second of time.

No light that had ever been kindled in former days in that lonely beacon had so illumined the outer gloom, or burned with such unutterable and continuous brightness, as did the ray which on that memorable Christmas-eve was let in upon the darkness of my soul. No more hesitation now, only one feverish succession of desperate efforts to restore circulation to the icy frame before me. I moistened his lips with the stimulant I had found in the flask. I forced some down his throat. I tore open his shirt and rubbed the region of his heart with all my might. I was no doctor or skilled nurse. I had no notion what to do for the best, but I chafed his hands and feet continually. I propped him up, and wrung the wet from out his hair and from his looser garments. I shook him and beat his arms and chest, and I grew even heated with the violent exertion I made to keep up some sort of friction.

It was a terrible ordeal. The dreadful darkness increased my anxiety tenfold. No means of getting a light—none could have lived in such a whirlwind as eddied through our frail and ruined chamber. I would have given worlds could I have watched his face, and

so have judged if there were any hope! My punishment then was the thought of the time that I had lost—my anguish was beyond telling.

The dreary hopeless longing which I felt for some sign of life in him was at length satisfied. I could distinctly hear when I put my ear close down that he was faintly breathing. The respiration grew stronger. I redoubled my exertions—forced more stimulant between his lips—and at last I heard him take one long deep breath.

Needless to follow now in detail the still anxious hours that passed before I was conscious that the tide had turned, and that the gale was abating. Many a time I expected that the old lightkeeper's words would come true, and that the ruin would be swept away before the blast; but through Heaven's mercy it weathered the storm, and by the time the waters had receded far enough I had the satisfaction of seeing lights approaching by the causeway from the shore, and of knowing that my helpless companion, though still unconscious, was breathing freely. The little lad was first to scale the remnant of shattered stairs. He had been for help; and two stalwart fishermen, lanterns in hand, soon made the transit with our burden to the shore easy.

It was past midnight, as, in the warm little cabin among the sand-hills, I had the delight of hearing from a kindly doctor whom the thoughtful boy had summoned from the town that all danger was past, and *that* I might lie down and sleep as far as I could into

Christmas-day. 'And,' said he, 'if you have not passed a merry Christmas-eve, you have, at least, been doing the Master's work.'

And so they were married; and a happier wife than she could not be found the wide world through. To be assured of this has been my lasting recompense; and if to bestow a lifelong happiness on the one held by us most dear be the glory and the privilege of unselfish perfect love, that glory and that privilege are mine.

Yes; they were married not very long after I had saved his life. A marine painter, he had been coasting about in search of the picturesque, and had chanced on the little seaport town early in the autumn.

Here he met her, and what wonder then that he should have lingered on, week after week, far into the winter, even though the district was not one to yield much food for his pencil? He had been quite straightforward and outspoken; she had loved him, and the wedding-day even was fixed when I made my appearance on the scene.

Too late indeed! But should I have ever been in time? No; assuredly no. Difficult as it may be to define its limits in such a case, friendship was yet the only feeling she had ever experienced for me. Whether, if I had shown her my heart earlier, this feeling would have changed to something deeper, I do not know and must not conjecture. The letters which I found upon him were the outpourings of her affection at such odd times and days as when they did not meet; for, in

pursuance of his art, he would make all sorts of sketching-trips in the neighbourhood whenever the weather was the least open. It was thus that he happened to go out to the old lighthouse on that particular day: he had been there before in calmer weather, but had wanted to get some hints from the in-rolling sea—to get behind it, as it were, and on the old causeway he had a good piece of vantage-ground to study from. The tide ran up, accelerated by the sudden wind, faster than he had looked for; but he was coming through it nevertheless, and would have done so, but for the old man, whose gestures he mistook, interpreting them as warnings of danger and signs that he should go back.

Each moment then increased his peril, and he lost his head. He could barely hear the voices of those on shore, much less what they said, the gale driving the sounds inland.

But stay; my story is told. It was a long time before I saw either him or her after their marriage; it is a still longer time since that event occurred, but their fireside is now the brightest spot on earth to me; and when I look on her calm sweet face, and hear her glad yet gentle laugh, I think no more of the lost love of my youth, but give thanks for that '*message of the hour*,' that whisper in the storm, that not only kept me from committing a dreadful crime, but granted me the greatest boon of all—that of securing a life's happiness for the only woman in the world I have ever asked to be my wife.

We always spend Christmas-day together (now that

we have met again); and she has two or three children still young enough to welcome the season as a time for tricks and merriment, to the enjoyment of which I trust my presence somewhat adds; and we elders bear in our hearts a solemn remembrance, which, if it be not all of joy, assuredly now bears no trace of sadness.

CHRISTMAS BY CONTRACT.

CHRISTMAS is not such a very bad time of year, after all. There is nothing in particular to be urged against it, but somehow, when one has turned the corner of forty years of age, you are terribly apt to forget it. All your little groove-like habits, upon the maintaining of which you pride yourself so much, are utterly upset by it; you are shunted-off into wrong lines; your stations and time-bills are all altered; an increase of traffic chokes up the sidings of the railroad of your life. In sheer despair you endeavour to conform to the exigencies of the season; but then the chances are that you do nothing at the right time, and are sorely prone to make a bungle of the whole festivities.

You do not do anything until it is too late; you miss lots of jolly things from entire forgetfulness of their existence—as, for instance, if the predilections of your childhood give you a lingering taste for pantomime, you probably only make up your mind to go and see one just as a casual glance at the theatrical advertisements informs you that it is the last week of *Harlequin Hop-o'-my-Thumb*, and when, as you know, half the

fun will be cut out, and the entertainment presented in a faded and worn-out form.

All this does not arise from any positive dislike to roast beef and plum-pudding; there may be no lingering distaste for geese and turkeys; mince-pies may not have become the *bête noire* of your existence; good cheer may be quite in your line, and you have no objection to general happiness, conviviality, and Christmas bounty; but it comes from a lukewarmness, an apathy, a *laissez-aller* tone of mind into which, under certain conditions, many of us are apt to fall when we have arrived at that time of life which may be only just past twoscore, but which our detractors vaguely designate as between forty and fifty.

Of course, this is very wrong; no defence is to be attempted for such a state of things; but if only some philanthropic and enterprising member of society would endeavour to organise a system by which it could all be done for us, the thanks and blessings of untold *blasé* spirits would be heaped upon him. That it would pay, there can be no doubt; and if the idea were only properly worked and carried out it might be worth the while of some intrepid promoter of companies to start one, to be called 'The Christmas-Festivities Contract Company (Limited).' He would not have to look far for a manager of such a concern. The gentleman whom from his name and aptitude for organising travel we may safely assume to be a descendant of that immortal *travailleur de la mer*, who sailed round the world when that exploit was no mean performance, and whose un-

happy fate at the hands and mouths of savages called forth our youthful tears, is the very man for the work. A well-printed and important-looking pamphlet, 'conducted' by this benefactor of his species, now lying before us, leads inevitably to the conclusion that he would be the right man in the right place. Eighteen pages of closely-printed matter—in part composed of prospective arrangements of travel and excursion, and in part of testimonials of already travelled and excursioned recipients of his beneficent and economical system—present unmistakable evidence of his enterprise and ability.

Let him 'do' Christmas for us as he 'does' the Continent; let him exactly follow out the plans of his excursion-tickets, and the fortune of the 'company' is insured, to say nothing of the unspeakable benefit he will confer upon many a well-intentioned, but weak-purposed, lover of ease. Then we should not find ourselves ruffled and irritated just at the time when all our kindest feelings and joyousness of heart should be uppermost; then we should not experience similar sensations to those engendered by a demand of twopence or a shilling a-head at our cathedral doors when bent on devotion or a reverent inspection of those holy places, and when calmness of mind and a desire to be devout are hopelessly banished by a vinegar-visaged verger or a blear-eyed pew-opener.

We should not be thwarted in our wish to enjoy ourselves by small vexations; the way would be smoothed for us precisely as it is in our efforts to see 'the wonders

of the world abroad' by the skilled *entrepreneur* just alluded to. How much bad temper and petty grievances very frequently go to mar our continental trips !

Petty troubles, the result of our inexperience or impatience, and the desire of 'Mossoo' to make the most he can out of us, are continually upsetting our equanimity, spoiling our naturally beaming expression of countenance, and detracting very seriously from the pleasure of our travel. The great caterer of excursions saves us most of this, if we are to believe (as, of course, we do) the statements in his journal. *His* tickets 'do' it all ; *we* need never be brought in contact with any disagreeables ; we tear off a *coupon* at Charing-cross, and we are delivered in Paris—tear off another, and we find ourselves at the hotel—another satisfies its landlord as well as a five-pound note—all the railway officials have a personal affection for you the moment they see you are the possessor of one of the magical green cases.

I believe it *has* been recorded, when, being of a retiring disposition, you have had the greatest difficulty in preventing an illumination, fireworks, and a general *festa* on your arrival in a continental city. You have had to fee the porters and the people to induce them to leave you to be conveyed to your hostelry in a carriage drawn by the natural tenants of its shafts, and to prevent their being replaced by the populace, and *you* dragged triumphantly to your place of destination.

The landlord has had to be suborned in order that you may not be serenaded, and have to make a speech

from your balcony *au premier*. Bankers bow to you, and intimate their willingness to advance you untold sums; diplomatists call upon you; and I am not quite sure that the Herzog, Kaiser, or King, does not send you several invitations as you pass through his domains.

So great is the faith all Europe appears to have in the mechanism and organisation of this marvellous institution, that your progress becomes little less than royal. Therefore, I say, let us have a similar mechanism and organisation for Christmas, and our progress through that festive season must be equally triumphant and agreeable. No longer will its approach annoy us, and its departure leave us demoralised, irritated, and depressed.

With twenty or thirty pounds in our pockets, an application to the 'Christmas-Festivities Contract Company (Limited)' should secure for us complete enjoyment of the season. For the benefit of the proposed company and its management, we venture therefore to hint at a few of the plans which occur to us as likely to give universal satisfaction.

As with your excursions, so should it be with your festivities. We are informed, it seems, that we can go all over Europe for thirty or forty pounds, every expense told; so ought it to be possible for us to go right through Christmas, from the second week in December up to 'Twelfth-night' inclusive, with everything completely 'done' for a like sum. The 'waits' of course would begin it. Four separate visitations of these

nightly serenaders, with a Christmas-carol singer or two thrown in on Christmas morning, would be more than sufficient.

Hampers bearing fictitious labels also would be sent to you, as if from friends in the country, three or four days in advance of the 25th of December. These shall be so arranged or packed as that their contents shall not clash or interfere one with the other. They shall contain the correct amount of turkeys, geese, sausages, mince-meat, celery, hams, tongues, elder-wine, &c.

An invitation to a Christmas-eve party likewise arrives, as do two or three for Christmas-day and successive days, at proper intervals for dinner- and evening-parties. These gatherings will be made up in reality of what we will call the 'Christmas Combination Companions.' The host's name alone shall be mythical, as one of the main objects to be borne in mind by these arrangements is rather to keep up the 'illusion' of Christmas than anything else, though there will be plenty of substantiality in them at the same time.

Tickets for the best places at the theatres will likewise be distributed, that shall be available on certain days during the period — notably one of course for 'Boxing-night' for the best pantomime in London.

Every novelty in the theatrical world will thus be placed at our disposal, and consequently we shall be perfectly *au fait* with all that is going on, and able to converse at our social gatherings on the doings of the town, instead of sitting helplessly silent upon the subject, as we frequently find ourselves obliged to do when

left to carry out our own travelling arrangements through these holiday times. There will be visits to the Polytechnic, Madame Tussaud's, and the Thames Tunnel, the German Fair, the Crystal Palace, the bazaars, and, indeed, to all the booths in the fair, having special and circumstantial connection *with* and incidental to Christmas. A certain amount of cab, omnibus, and 'Underground' also will be at our disposal; and for the benefit of country visitors, parties will be organised and conducted through the gaieties by the manager himself or some of his assistants.

A programme will accompany the packet of tickets stating days, times, methods of reaching the various points of interest, and all details of arrangements. Corresponding with these will be found *coupons* attached to the tickets, which are only to be torn off and given up when demanded, as they will be, at the proper time and place, by the servants of the 'company,' who shall be easily distinguishable by their holiday gaiety of attire, and general hilarity and jocosity of manner. At the various parties* before mentioned there will be an unlimited supply of holly and mistletoe, 'snapdragon,' 'hunt the slipper,' and 'blind-man's

* At the Christmas-day and other dinner-parties all 'Christmas Combination Companions' shall be 'so agreeably placed at the tables that it will be difficult to recognise distinctions of positions or classes in the social scale.' This will be a great and pleasant feature in these magnificent meetings, 'where the titled, the wealthy, and the more humble Christmas Combination Companions will meet at the same board,' and all will be 'alike treated with respect and attention.'

buff,' music, dancing (including 'Sir Roger de Coverley'), laughter, mirth, and general jollity *ad libitum*. There will be a yule log, and a boar's head shall be brought in by a rubicund-faced portly steward or cook (just as depicted by the graphic pencil of Mr. John Gilbert) to the strain of 'The Roast Beef of Old England.' The festive board will groan in the most approved manner under every appropriate delicacy and substantiality of the season; the conversation, toasts, jokes, &c., shall strictly partake in their tone of every proper sentiment and reference appertaining to the time of year, and will be superintended by the manager and his highly-trained staff.

The waiters and attendants will explode with suppressed laughter at the proper time, when certain special puns are made, and riddles asked and replied to. And, on the occasion of the final entertainment—namely, 'Twelfth-night'—the characters and cake will be of unparalleled lightness and digestibility, the former possessing an amount of fundamental fun seldom found in private society.

In addition, there will be a liberal supply of Christmas presents and New-Year's gifts delivered with punctuality at the correct time at the residence of each 'Christmas Combination Companion,' whose name and place of abode, &c., will have been duly registered at the company's office. These testimonials will be of the most orthodox nature, and consist of Christmas books, periodicals, nicknacks, 'Merry-Christmas offerings,' and 'Happy-New-Year welcomes,' printed and illumin-

ated in the best and latest style. Should the temperature unluckily not be, as is frequently the case, in accordance with the traditionary notions about frost and snow, means will be adopted on various occasions to ice the places of meeting, halls, waiting-rooms, &c., by means of a newly-invented patent medical vaporising refrigerator.

Artificial slides and sheets of ice, together with skates, will be provided for the more juvenile and active 'Christmas Combination Companions.'

Of course it will be at the discretion of the 'Christmas Combination Companion' how much of this gaiety and healthful dissipation he will 'go in' for.

Separate packets of tickets at a cheaper rate, containing *coupons* only for part of what is above enumerated, will be issued, and extra vouchers can be had by paying the difference, as their purchaser finds himself more or less fascinated and drawn into the vortex of Christmas gaiety.

Thus, for example, any one not wishing for such outside and out-door luxuries as the 'waits' and Christmas carols, Madame Tussaud's, the Thames Tunnel, or frost, snow, and skates, and whose capacities would be satisfied with one hamper and a couple of dinner-parties, and whose imagination is sufficiently lively to realise the full illusion of the festive season by the receipt of a single New-Year's offering, of course could get through the time at a smaller figure.

Anybody able to dispense with the memory of Twelfth-night, and who would be content with seeing,

say, half the best pantomimes in London, of course would be able to cut down the expenses of his journey to something that, we imagine, would put the matter within the reach of persons whose incomes are generally found sufficient to keep up with their tastes and habits.

At any rate, as we have said, the extent of their indulgence will depend on their proclivities and their pockets. But certain we are that the scheme above suggested would be a remunerative and highly-esteemed addition to the institutions daily springing up around us, under the impetus which our civilisation gives to everything that is novel and conducive to the increase of laziness and lessening of labour.

UNDER THE BLACK BEAM.


EVER a wanderer at heart, I am as fond to this day, at the age of sixty-three, of tramping about from place to place as when I first began to feel my legs, and when a certain independence gave me the freedom to use them as I pleased. Not as a mere pedestrian do I take my walks abroad (though I have done my thirty-five miles in a day when necessary), but because I have been of an inquiring turn of mind, liking to see for myself as much as possible, at home and abroad, the ways of men and cities. Not as a mere superficial observer either (if I may say it of myself) have I tramped these many years up and down the world. I have always watched with as much interest the workings of social, commercial, and political institutions as I have the outer aspect of people, things, and places; making thorough acquaintance with the varied conditions of my kind, as circumstances or the country's laws beget them.

Thus, churches, museums, picture-galleries, and the rest of the hackneyed sights of a capital or district never quite satisfied my inquisitive disposition. I, forsooth, must push my personal experiences into courts of justice, national assemblies, parliaments, and so

forth; the interior of dockyards, manufactories, prisons, lunatic asylums, hospitals, workhouses, institutions for the blind, deaf, and dumb: in a word, like the oft-quoted French *sapeur*, nothing to me was sacred.

Equally attractive too have ever been the beauties of Nature. These, under every phase and aspect, have employed as fair a share of my attention and enthusiasm as have the abodes of men. The solitudes of mountains, forests, or the sea-shore have had equal charms, in their turn, with the hum and bustle of commercial centres; and I believe I have appreciated, with the enthusiasm of a painter, all the glories of form and colour which Nature displays, with such prodigal hands, to those who have the eye to appreciate and the heart to feel them.

But I must stay my pen; it is not, fortunately for the reader, to give an account of my personal predilections that I have taken it up; only thus much about myself it has been necessary to say, for the understanding of what is to follow. Naturally, some amount of adventure must have resulted from such a life; some episodes, serious and comic, that may be more or less worth the telling. To tell of the most serious, however, of all that ever befell me, is the purpose of this present writing—so serious, indeed, that there was well-nigh a chance of its having brought my nomadic existence to a premature and ignoble close. Very horrible was that time, and I shall never cease to look back at it with a shudder, though nearly thirty years have passed since then.



Well, it was the merry month of July, and upon a gorse and bramble-covered eminence overhanging a certain retired little fishing-town on our south-western coast sat an artist hard at work at his easel. Sheltered by his white umbrella from the rays of the fierce but declining sun, absorbed in the portrayal of the lovely landscape before him, he failed to observe the noiseless approach of a strolling pedestrian. This latter, however, did not (as he at first felt inclined) go up and boldly examine the sketch, but flung himself down at a little distance, and thence contemplated, as his strong eyesight enabled him to do, the aspect of the painter himself; for there was something peculiar about him, at once fascinating and disagreeable. Fascinating, because he was young, good-looking, wild, and enthusiastic; disagreeable, because his appearance conjured up some unpleasant and at the same time untraceable reminiscence. Where had I seen him before?

This was the question that interested me, so soon as I came close enough to see his face, and to its solution I devoted myself unsuccessfully for nearly a quarter of an hour, as I lay there watching him. He did not notice me all that while, but at last, rising from his camp-stool, and stepping back to take a more distant view of his work, he glanced in my direction, and apparently annoyed at the unexpected presence of a stranger, scowled forbiddingly, and in resettling to his work so readjusted his umbrella as to shield himself from further observation. Taking the hint, I immedi-

ately rose, and departed towards the town, where I was staying. He too was evidently staying at the same place, for, after this first evening's meeting, I constantly came across him in the neighbourhood. I was there, as I am anywhere during my wanderings, for my own behoof and pleasure; sketching, boating, botanising, what not; but whenever I met this young fellow, I somehow seemed to wish I were anywhere else, for associated with him was always the same vague unpleasant reminiscence, which I could not account for.

One day, reluctantly on his part, but determinately on mine, we got into conversation. I had been sketching down on the shore; he arrived there, apparatus in hand, and seemed casting about in doubt as to where he should settle himself for a sketch. Very civilly I ventured a suggestion as to position. He thanked me curtly in a grating voice, and with a strong north-country accent. I took advantage of this introduction to see if I could, by a little talk with him, discover the cause of the curious effect his presence always had upon me, and find an answer to the for ever unduly-recurring question, 'Where have I seen him before?'

'I am a mere amateur, you know,' I went on to say, 'but I am very fond of art; I have seen a good deal of it, and I know very many artists. I can't help thinking I must have met you at some time or other, but for the life of me I cannot remember where.'

'It may be,' he replied abstractedly, as he gazed round at sea and sky, cliff and rock. 'I don't remember you. On that ledge, there, do you say there is a

good subject?' he added, pointing to a spot I had indicated.

'Yes. I will show you exactly where I think it comes best; I have been trying to do a little daub of it; it may give you an idea of the lines as they arrange themselves.' And I took the sketch from my folio whilst speaking.

He gave but the merest glance at it, looking with his fierce piercing eyes in another direction the next instant, reminding me of the ever-shifting, ever far-off gaze observable in some birds or beasts of prey. We moved towards the ledge of rock. I continued,

'You have been doing a good deal of work here, I imagine?'

No answer. I repeated my inquiry.

'I beg your pardon; what did you say? O, yes, yes,' he quickly added, 'a great deal, a great deal; there's fine stuff about here; just what I like;' but as soon as we began to walk he bent his gaze upon the ground, and became very absent.

I was garrulous, however, as is my wont; for having thoroughly got over, from long experience, the exclusiveness of the Briton with regard to strangers, I am not to be put down by a display of that quality in my countrymen, and in my time I have drawn out and developed the most unpromising hermit-like people into really conversational pleasant beings. So I went on chatting, and as we reached the ledge of rock began to point out the subject; but he soon cut me short, and in an awkward absent manner, and with a strange

forbidding look, declared that he had done with sketching for the day, and abruptly turned away by a path up the face of the cliff. Not prepossessed by this little interview, I endeavoured to dismiss him from my thoughts, and in this I fairly well succeeded, for more than a week elapsed ere I saw him again. Then we met accidentally in the street of the little town, and, apparently determined that I should not forget him, he made as if he were going to stop and speak; then, seeming to alter his mind, he gave me a sullen scowl and passed on.

‘Confound the fellow,’ I thought, ‘what does he mean by frowning at me? I wish I could remember where I have seen him before.’

After this I saw him but once again, but that once was sufficient for a lifetime.

Far away upon the lonely desolate shore which stretches for miles to the west of the little fishing-town, I find myself late one evening at the end of that same July, apparently the only living creature to be seen. A canopy of heavy storm-clouds, which have been welling slowly up from the south for several hours, has now obscured the summer sky as with a pall, bringing into ghostly relief the chalk cliffs abounding on the coast, and the solitary whitewashed coastguard station standing upon the highest promontory. I have strolled thither after my usual habit in such neighbourhoods, watching the effects of wind and weather, and making notes of the beauties that strike me. The natural ap-

proach of twilight is hastened by the ever-deepening gloom of the clouds ; I shall barely save the daylight as it is, and knowing there is a short cut across the downs, I ascend a cliff path which passes close by the coastguard station. Exchanging a word or two with the man on duty at the look-out about the coming storm, I make straight off for a copse or fir plantation through which the way lies. This is scarcely three hundred yards distant, but to reach it I have to descend into a little cup-like hollow of the hill, the bottom of which is not in view until I am close upon it. As I reach it, the first thing I see is my artist friend packing up his traps, and evidently on the point of starting homewards. He has been sketching, and I come up with him unavoidably, as he is just slinging his haversack on to his shoulder, and after an awkward sort of recognition, we ascend the further side of the little valley, and enter the wood together. The path almost immediately becomes so narrow that there is no room for us to walk side by side, so we go on in Indian file, he taking the lead, which I have willingly accorded him. As I do not greatly care for his company, it is my intention to drop well behind, but he proceeds so slowly that I cannot keep much distance between us. I endeavour to stimulate his pace by suggesting that we shall get a wetting if we don't push ahead, for large rain-drops are beginning to patter solemnly among the trees, which, now growing thicker and thicker, lend additional gloom to the place.

He takes no notice of what I say, and, as now I

cannot pass him, we jog on as we are for a few paces. I know that presently the wood will open a little at a clearing; 'then,' I say to myself, 'I will go on independently.' Just before we reach this spot his haversack slips, and appears to inconvenience him, laden as he is with easel, camp-stool, &c. As he endeavours to restrap it, two or three small articles fall out—a colour-box, a brush-case, a small pocket sketch-book, a sponge, a water-bottle. Hastily picking up the two former, and cramming them back into the sack, he goes on without apparently noticing the book and the other things. I come upon them, and pick them up. I call to him.

'Bring them along,' he replies, without stopping or looking back; 'put them in your pocket. I don't want them.'

'Nonsense, my dear sir,' I say, hurrying up behind him; 'here's your book and—'

'Keep it, keep it,' he hastily interrupts; 'it will be of use to you, it's of none to me. There are some useful figures in it. You are a dabbling amateur, and amateurs are seldom good at figures.'

Again I remonstrate; again he repeats something to the same effect as before; and as I cannot get him to stop or turn round, I carry the articles for a little way, irresolute, and then, as some overhanging branches oblige me to push them aside, I drop the sketch-book, &c., mechanically into my shooting-coat pocket, in order to get the free use of my hand. In another minute we are emerging into the clearing where there is

more light, and I am about to renew my protestations concerning the book, thinking all the while how odd his manner is, when he, on a sudden, turns round, faces me, and with a jerk and clatter flings down his sketching apparatus.

I am not less startled by the abruptness of this proceeding than by his strange and wild expression. His face, always long and thin, now looks horribly so, and ghastly pale, whilst his eyes, usually bright and piercing, have a cat-like glaze over them, and glitter rather than shine. The nasal and cheek bones stand out with undue prominence; one of his thin bony hands runs quickly through his wavy brown hair, pushing off his wideawake; his other, raised to his inner breast-pocket, nervously clutches what, to my horror, I see is the butt-end of a pistol. There is a clammy crust of foam round his thin beardless lips, as he gasps out in his hollow grating voice, 'You are right; we have met before; but we shall never meet there again! Villain, blasphemer, perjurer though I am, I will not have my steps dogged by you, or any one. Never again within those walls shall—'

He is drawing his pistol out now, and I am on the point of rushing at him, when he steps briskly back a pace or two, turns the muzzle straight against his heart, and with the loud ringing report that follows springs high into the air, and falls face downwards at my feet, dead!

With a frantic impulse I turn the body over, and then for the first time, as I gaze upon his agonised and

distorted features, I remember with the suddenness of a lightning flash where I have seen him before.

It was in the padded room at the Homeskirk lunatic asylum.

Aghast, bewildered, unconscious of what next happens, I only know that some little while later I am surrounded by a small group of people, two or three coastguardsmen, and a farm-labourer. One of the former, a petty officer by his uniform, addresses me civilly but firmly.

‘This is a bad business, sir! I don’t know what you may wish to say about it, but, if I may make so bold, I’d recommend you to say nothing now.’

‘Say nothing now? Why? What do you mean?’

‘Well, you see, sir, it might complicate matters. We should have to repeat what you say, and it might be used against you.’

‘Used against me?’ say I, the truth not yet dawning on me; ‘explain yourself.’

‘Well, my man here, who was on duty at the lookout, saw you and’ (here the coastguardsman gives a jerk with his thumb over his shoulder) ‘and the young gentleman that was making the draught come into the wood together, and a few minutes afterwards he hears the report of firearms, and as it is his duty to inquire into such things, and to prevent ’em, lest they be mistook for signals, why, you see, he runs quickly down the hill, and up here into this bit of clearing, and what does he find? Why, you kneeling over the unfortunate

young gentleman, with the pistol in one hand and the other a-feeing inside the breast of his coat, and then, when my man fetches us, he says, "That young fellow, when he was making his draught this afternoon, began talking to me; and when I asked him about his draughtings, and supposed they was worth a good deal of money, he replies, 'Money! I should think they were too! see here!'" and he pulls out of a little book a whole bundle of bank-notes and flourishes them in my face, saying, 'I've got all these for some drawings I have made lately hereabouts.'" Well, you see, sir, when my man tells me this, the first thing we do when we come here is to overhaul the young gentleman's pockets, and then the notes and the little draughting book where he had 'em are nowhere to be seen, and this being the case I'm afraid I must keep my eye upon you till I have reported the matter to the police.'

As the coastguardsman proceeds with this statement I gradually become aware of the serious position I am in; and just as he finishes, I recollect that probably the sketch-book in question is the one at this moment in my pocket. The long-impending storm now bursts overhead in a deluge of rain; the wind rages; and amidst thunder and lightning and a pitchy darkness, I am taken back virtually in custody to the lonely coast-guard station.

Committed for trial on the charge of wilful murder! Thus stood I, 'under the black beam,' the shadow of the gallows, for the verdict of the coroner's jury, and

the decision of the local magistrates went dead against me.

That I have long since emerged from it is of course pretty evident, but men have been hanged upon less circumstantial evidence than was brought against me. Forty-five pounds in notes were stuffed into the pocket of that fatal sketch-book which was found in my possession. It was impossible for me to prove that I had not stolen it, or that the pistol did not belong to me. True no one had ever seen me with it until the coastguardsman came up, but equally true was it that no one had ever seen the unhappy man with such a weapon. We could never find out how he came by it, or how he had managed so carefully to conceal it. These were awkward facts which told heavily against me, setting aside minor details. No, there was only one line of defence, and this, in the end, was adopted successfully.

I had to prove that the young artist was a suicidal maniac, who had been in confinement in the Homes-kirk asylum at the time I had visited it some few years previously; that he had been released under the impression that he was cured; and that it was quite possible for the malady to have returned. I could but rely upon my position in life, and my hitherto untarnished character, for having my account of the tragedy believed.

But, ah me! the anxiety whilst these things were pending and the evidence got together! The director of the asylum who had shown me over it was dead; the keepers or attendants changed or discharged; the

medical men and other authorities connected with the case were all in the far North, and were subpoenaed with considerable difficulty. The friends of the unfortunate lunatic had been greatly to blame in allowing him such unwatched freedom, but it was thought that, in permitting him to travel in pursuit of his much-loved art, they were adopting the surest means of restoring him to health. I recollected afterwards that he had been pointed out to me during my inquisitorial visit to the asylum as a peculiar case of monomania. He believed that he had committed some dreadful crime, which he could only expiate with his life. I recollect that he eyed me distrustfully, appearing to overhear and resent the muttered remarks the doctor made about him. He recognised me probably from the first, when we again met on the height above that little seaside town, and my face may have revived in his poor demented brain some horrible and mysterious association, and thus became the exciting cause of that access of his madness which ended in self-destruction. However this may have been, it was not difficult to account for the strange and disagreeable effect his presence always had upon me. Could I but have remembered earlier where I had seen him before, I should have been, of course, on my guard. His life, poor fellow, might have been spared, and I should have escaped the fearful suffering I endured whilst standing under the shadow of the black beam.

PASCHAL AND THE PADLOCK.

‘THERE they are; fifteen hundred of them! Come and see for yourself; fifteen hundred of the greatest malefactors and scoundrels in England, and all so well in hand, that they dare not cough even, if they are ordered not to cough!’ And so I went and saw them, and a strange, impressive, and melancholy sight it was. Boulter was a friend of mine, and his name well fitted his occupation, for his occupation was *gaoling* on a large scale. Boulter was a soldier, every inch of him, and at the age of eighteen had commanded a company of his regiment a week after his arrival in the Crimea. Now he had settled down to a very different, but even more important command—the command of the great convict prison at Talkham.

It had gone forth that I was to pay him a visit, and in the above tempting terms ran his final invitation; and Easter-tide being the tide that served us both, to Talkham I went, on the eve of last Good Friday. Boulter met me at the Talkham railway station, and we were soon seated in his snug house facing a green glacis, and backed by the prison walls. ‘To-morrow morning,’ said he, ‘you will see them first in chapel,

and I will tell you and show you, when the service is over, all that may interest you about them.'

But there was very little he had to tell or show, which equalled in interest or impressiveness that first sight I had of them on the Good Friday morning, when, assembled in serried ranks, they covered the floor and galleries of the sacred edifice. Sacred edifice! Great Heaven! A sacred edifice filled with such a congregation! A congregation composed of the worst specimens of humanity, a sort of Liebig-like concentrated essence of everything that was atrocious and hateful, brought there together to listen to the purest, highest, and noblest thoughts and words that can ever be set before mankind. In no pharisaical sense do I insist that the anomaly of the situation it was that struck me most. God knows, we have all the direst need of these same words and thoughts to keep us even moderately well-behaved to one another; and it can be urged of course that to none, therefore, are they more necessary than to those wretched, drab-coated, crop-haired, bullet-headed felons upon whom I was then gazing, those pests of our social system. Yet to a certain extent anomalous, I repeat, seemed the whole affair to me.

'Are they impressed at all by the service?' said I, when it was over, to my friend.

'Immensely,' he replied, 'when I am looking at them.'

Not promising this, from one who should be able to judge; but all I know is, the service was highly im-

pressive to me. In the form of a Maltese cross, the chapel had reading-desk and pulpit right and left of the chancel, which occupied one division of the cross, and in which were placed the pews of the governor and upper officials. Here I sat, shielded from the view of only a portion of the convicts by a small curtain and open-railed screen, and there to my right, in the body of the cross, and facing me, they sat, row after row, in their drab dress, each line of them flanked by a blue-coated warder, looking like an important capital letter dominating a crowd of cringing italics—the broad black arrow, stamped about their clothes in great profusion, suggesting the notion that the devil had taken many a grip of them from time to time, and had left the mark of his claws; whilst their close-cut hair, and in most cases their low, receding, contracted foreheads, by no means lessened the impression that there were a good many of his blood-relations amongst them. The silence which prevailed, when their number is considered, was quite remarkable, and the absence of that usual coughing and ahem-ing, so prevalent in most churches, would have told me by the ear that I was surrounded by no ordinary congregation.

The sun streamed in at the high windows, and, mockery of mockeries! numerous sparrows fluttered in and out at the open panes, chirping and battling with their shrill little notes, as if deriding the lords of the creation caged up at their feet. Having them decidedly at a disadvantage for this once at any rate, they took care, these little fat, sleek, and impertinent feathered

bipeds, to lose no chance of making manifest their superiority. In and out they flew with a great pomposity of wing-flapping, as much as to say, 'Don't you see how free we are? We can do as we like, we can! there is nobody to interfere with us, do you see? Our legs are quite free; we can hop and skip and perch where we list. There are no great heavy chains fastened to our feet; but then it is true we have not tried to murder warders, as all you who wear such gyves have. Bread and water, too, is no such punishment to us as it is to you, when you refuse to work and misbehave yourselves. We can get fat upon it, as a glance upwards will show you. Then, as to making a noise, why, you are a poor miserable set, not to be able even to cough when you like. Listen to us, we can make as much row as we please; neither governor, chaplain, nor any one can stop *our* notes. We need not listen to the sermon unless we choose.' And much more to the same effect seemed these little blustering sparrows to be saying to the prisoners; and the silence to which I have referred imposed upon the congregation only rendered the fluttering and the twittering, the in-and-out going, and general freedom of the birds, more apparent and fuller of contrast.

Full of contrast again to this same imposed silence came the first response in the prayers. It swelled out upon my ear in a rough harmony quite startling; the hitherto pent-up utterance of word or sound appearing to lend additional zest to this, the first opportunity that the prisoners had of using their lungs. Louder

and louder too grew the diapason, as the responses became more frequent and longer, until, when a hymn was sung, the fifteen hundred voices, bursting out in a natural *crescendo*, made the very walls and roof reverberate with the volume of sound. The effect was almost grand at times, and always impressive; but as I listened I could not conceal the conviction that the words counted for little by the side of the enjoyment which these cowed felons found in the shout they were thus enabled to indulge in. The fact that it was a cry of penitence, as far as words could make it, I felt was little heeded by many of them; their delight consisted in being able for a brief space to make a noise.

. Here and there, no doubt, there were some repentant hearts, which lifted upwards both voice and words in a sincere spirit, but these I fear were in the minority; and as the chaplain, eventually moving from reading-desk to pulpit, struck the key-note to what was uppermost in my mind by his text, the anomaly, contrast, incongruity—call it what you like—of the position became to me more than ever apparent.

The day, the anniversary of the great Sacrifice—the very culmination, as it were, of our whole religious system—lent additional force to all that was spoken in that edifice, bringing into stronger relief every sacred symbol and phrase; and the, if possible, additional light thus shed upon the whole service tended only, to my thinking, to throw into deeper gloom the ghastly background of vice and crime which the mass of listeners present furnished.

‘Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily, I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise.’

Strange was it indeed to hear this text propounded to such an assembly. The hope conveyed in it was the only solace one had in such a scene. Yet how few there could take it truly to heart, or who would even attempt to do so! How few there would even ask to be remembered! It was a terrible subject to contemplate. My impression is that few even were listening, for whenever I raised my eyes I caught a dozen or more of the nearest convicts stealing furtive glances at me, my presence as a stranger offering an easier, and to them a more interesting, subject of speculation than the sermon. The terrible monotony of the round of their lives, and of the faces they have to confront, causes every new-comer to be surrounded in their eyes by a sort of fortuitous interest. He becomes a kind of raree-show to them; ‘and,’ added Boulter, when I expressed some such supposition, ‘this is particularly the case if the stranger happens to display a more than usual amount of watch-chain, gold stud, or diamond ring. As a rule, we don’t give them this treat often.’

The hope, however, held out in the very able exposition of the text—an exposition as praiseworthy for its simplicity and cleverness as for its good taste and kindly Christian tone—was, I repeat, one’s only consolation; and however few the truly repentant were, however disproportionate their numbers, one knew that to that extent at least incalculable good was being

done, and that if the majority reaped no benefit from the service, they were obliged to conform to a decent observance of the day—not, after all, an insignificant advantage, when it is remembered how, in this our church-going England, the holy character of Good Friday is desecrated and forgotten by the masses. Visions of the saturnalia, for which in some districts and amongst certain classes it forms the plea, rose in my mind. I saw the avidity with which it is seized upon as a holiday, owing, as I cannot but think, to the rarity of such occasions, and of the scarcity of the leisure granted to our labouring classes for genuine and legitimate relaxation ; and I saw in my mind's eye how, in the anxiety to escape for a brief interval into the fresh air of heaven, or into the atmosphere of sociability and merry-making, the origin of the anniversary is lost sight of.

A host of reflections in this strain crowded upon me as the sermon proceeded, and consequently it was impossible not to speculate as to how far such an ignorant disregard of sacred things mainly helped to people the building I was then sitting in. There were, I knew, at that moment, thousands upon thousands of unhappy human creatures graduating, as it were, for the benches of this place ; thousands upon thousands of children actually being trained to keep up the supply of this congregation. Tenants for the convict cells were then being qualified all over the country, in every place where the coarse and brutal fashion of holiday-making in vogue on Good Friday amongst the great unwashed

was going on. Miserable always to remember this, it was doubly so on such an occasion. To think that this day, which obviously, if it is to be anything, should be one, if not of fasting and humiliation, of quietude and sobriety,—one that, at least, should be as strictly observed as a Sunday, and not especially selected for rejoicing and roistering joviality,—was, I say, doubly painful as I listened to that story of Mount Calvary, told as it was to the convicts at Talkham. As a more than usually noisy fluttering and chirping arose from the sparrows suddenly, and then as suddenly ceased, at this stage in my reflections; and as I saw numerous eyes listlessly attracted upwards to the free-going birds, I wondered how many of the congregation had ever, until they came within these walls, spent the day decently. I wondered, too, in what sort of spirit they looked back upon the drunken debauches for which it had, for years past, been the signal, or if they looked back at all. And then I began to wonder how many amongst them there might be who, far removed by station and antecedents from the more obvious hotbeds of vice and crime; who, having no associations whatever with the criminal classes, had nevertheless been betrayed, by some overwhelming and unexpected temptation, into a quite un contemplated criminal act. I wondered if there might not be one or two men there who in such a way, having placed themselves within the pale of the law, were justly paying the penalty for their *lâche*, and who yet stood better in the eyes of God than troops and troops of others freely going on their way.

And I wondered whether the torments of remorse, from which they were now suffering, could be exceeded by the desperately severe, hard, bodily labour to which they were all condemned. I asked myself, was it not just possible that a good many now at large ought in reality to change places with several of the occupants of those benches, or, at least, to be there as well? Was it not just possible that a few people, living apparently quite exemplary lives—people who had never been so awkwardly criminal as to be found out in their misdeeds—should have places reserved for them under that roof? And my vagrant mind wandered away after all sorts of individuals that, as it seemed to me, should have been present.

Did I not know—do we not all of us know—that there are, in addition to the criminals who form the staple commodity wherewith our prisons are stocked, criminals by birth, inheritance, and education, hundreds of notorious scoundrels who live by plunder, whose ways are all nefarious, under-handed, licentious, vicious, and emphatically criminal in every respect, and who, notwithstanding the notoriety of their habits, contrive just to keep clear of breaking the letter of the law?

Yes, we know all this when our attention is drawn to the subject, but we do not think much about it otherwise; we go on eating and drinking, and enjoying ourselves, and if we chance to glance at the doings of the Central Criminal Court, and read that ‘the judge sentenced the prisoner to fifteen years’ penal servitude,’ we shrug our shoulders, and say it serves him right, he has

been found out, and must be punished. The knowledge that he was ' afterwards removed ' slightly enhances our satisfaction for the moment, but we soon forget him, and the deed which brought him to this pass. Very few of us ever consider what then becomes of him ; and I confess that, until his reappearance here on this Good Friday morning, in the chapel of Talkham prison, I had never given a thought as to what penal servitude meant. No, not so much thought as I have often given to the clown, when the curtain had fallen on the pantomime, and the lights were put out.

Unpleasant as the reminder was, I am glad to have had it, and I am of opinion that, despite any morbid attraction there may be in renewing the acquaintance, it would be rather beneficial than otherwise, if it were permitted for more of us to dive down into this lowest depth of our social ocean. I believe that good rather than harm would come from a more frequent contemplation of the sights to be found at the bottom. To behold the débris of the wrecks of human existence, to see the shoal on which the rudderless barks were finally cast, and even to contemplate the agony of their crews, is not without advantage, painful as the spectacle necessarily must be. A more intimate knowledge of the awful punishment in store for wrong-doers would surely be deterrent in its effect. Surely, crime would be checked if its result were more generally exposed to the view of those who, from any reasons, may be tempted to commit penal offences. Any one, however abandoned, ignorant, or brutalised, seeing what I saw, would

think twice before laying himself open to such a doom.

Incarceration for many years is not realised in all its terrible bearings sufficiently. We do not realise completely, when we have read of the sentence passed on the prisoner, what it means, and how, for the next fifteen or twenty mortal years, the wretch will be subjected to a monotony of existence which, in itself alone, is frightful. We ourselves shall probably, during that period, complete our preparation for our profession, trade, or what not; we shall make our start in life, succeed or fail, pass through a thousand vicissitudes pleasurable or painful, marrying, or giving in marriage, burying, weeping, or rejoicing, and complaining if by illness or any other misadventure we are compelled to spend a few weeks, or even a few hours, in our own room. In a word, while we remain with all the natural enjoyments and responsibilities of a free agency, the luckless culprit is reduced to a mere cog in a piece of wheeled machinery, from which escape is impossible, and upon which such heavy wear and tear is inflicted that, when the grinding shall be over, he is left worn down and worthless, with nothing to show for all his toil. It appears to me that, if the true state of things was made more familiar through the press, the words would come home to some in a salutary manner, and our cheap literature, finding, as it does, its way now amongst all classes, might help to serve, in this respect, another of its good ends.

I have said that nothing impressed me during my

visit to my friend Boulter so much as the service on Good Friday morning, and therefore I have hung what I had to say principally on that point; but, of course, the whole *entourage* of convict life was laid before me, and I had an opportunity of observing it in detail. I was shut up in one of the cells, I tasted the bread, and the soup, and the porridge. Nearly always accompanied by the twittering sparrows aloft at the open windows, I passed through the intricacies of the passages and halls, with their iron gates, bars, and double locks; the infirmary, the parade-grounds, the laundry, and the cook-house. I saw convict cooks, convict washing-men, convict bakers, convict tailors and boot-makers, convict painters, carpenters, bricklayers, and stone-masons, and above all convict 'navvies,' these latter forming the great bulk of the establishment, for by digging and delving, and general navvy's work, is the real sentence of condemnation to hard labour carried out; the advantageous results of such labour being very visible in the land reclaimed from the river, in the huge basins and docks in course of construction outside, but in the vicinity of, the prison. Nine hours' heavy work per day in mud and clay has by this time made a great increase in the capabilities of Talkham dockyard; and there is a satisfaction in learning that by this *travail forcé* every item of the prison expenses, from the governor's salary down to the last pound of soap or smallest repairs, has been defrayed, during the last year, by the convicts' labour alone, leaving a balance to the good of the state of several thousand pounds. I do not go into

the question of this interference (as it is thought to be in some quarters) with the honest-labour market; it only seems to me right that the establishment should be self-supporting, and that it should, as it does by our modern arrangements, serve as the cesspool for the villany floating in the stream of society, and that our colonies and new possessions should no longer be polluted by the dregs of humanity, as they were in the so-called 'good old Botany Bay days.' Right too, I am bound to confess, it appears to me, that the food supply to the convicts should be cut down to what is only absolutely necessary. The pampered criminal was a gross and preposterous social mistake, as it must appear to any one when told that, during the time that Sir Joshua Jebb's penal principles held sway, pounds and pounds of broken victuals were daily collected when 'messieurs les assassins' had deigned to satisfy their appetites at dinner or tea. Good living should not be a premium offered to offenders; a prison should not be more comfortable than the home of a labouring man. The doctors tell us that we all eat too much; that we should all be the better if we rose from our meals, feeling that we could still eat a little more; and it is just this principle which regulates the supply of aliment to the prisoners. They are only provided with as much as is good for them, and the general health of the men proves that the calculation is nicely adjusted.

The tender-hearted and inexperienced in such matters would be fain to have much of the severe discipline relaxed, I doubt not, could they be brought

face to face with the conditions, as I was. *I* confess even to a pang of sympathy and pity during the first few hours of my experience at Talkham. When I beheld the desperate rigour of the authority exercised over the convicts, the stern way in which they are treated by the warders, and the more than military discipline to which they are subjected, my flesh quivered once or twice. Separate gangs of workers, each controlled by one or more warders, and kept to the work in hand with unflinching persistency, surrounded in every direction by flying sentries of the armed civil guard, mounted upon platforms or any eminence whence the convicts could be supervised,—all spoke of such firm determination in the carrying out of the sentence, that with the additional contemplation of the actual hard labour going forward, I felt disposed to think now and then that such treatment was hardly justifiable, especially when I remembered that none were there for less than five years, and many for life. I did not immediately appreciate the fact that, after all, quiet submission to the inexorable rule secured a man from anything like over-harsh measures, and that good conduct, a show of obedience, and willingness to undergo the legalised expiation of his crime, pointing reasonably and practically, as they must, to a sense of remorse on his part, and a desire to repent, eventually tell in his favour, and procure for him certain indulgences in the shape of diet, lighter work, and a remission of a fourth of his term.

I was farther brought back to a healthy view of the

question by Boulter constantly reminding me, that ninety out of every hundred of the workers before me were criminals of the blackest dye ; for the bulk is not made up of milk-and-water thieves and mere pick-pockets, or even of forgers and embezzlers, but of desperate burglars, ruffian garroters—fellows who never attempt a robbery without violence—and murderers who have barely escaped the extreme penalty ; scoundrels who would never hesitate to inflict on you, if not death, a life-long bodily injury, for the sake of a shirt-stud or watchchain ; brutes who would batter your brains out, chloroform or poison you, as soon as look at you ; who have beaten their wives to death, kicked and maltreated their little children, and who even there, in the expiation of their crimes, will not hesitate to take advantage of the smallest show of relaxation or kindness on the part of their warders to try and cut them down with a spade or pick-axe—blackguards who will even maim themselves, make a pretence of committing suicide, sham madness, fits, paralysis, or anything, to get off their work, to excite sympathy in the chaplain, or to procure an extra share of diet ; who will lie, cringe, backbite, and ‘round,’ as they call it, upon their fellow-prisoners, in the meanest and most despicable manner.

So that by the time my visit was ended, and I had leisure to contemplate the whole bearings of the case, I admit I felt a grim satisfaction, rather than anything else, in having found out and justly appreciated convict life—a grim satisfaction, which was enhanced the first time that I next read of some felonious and desperate

outrage committed in our midst. I felt a grim satisfaction, I repeat, in knowing what punishment was in store for the ruffian culprit.

It is not my purpose to recount all the details of this our state-prison system which were laid before me; they have often been written about, and statistically stated. I have only wished to put on record, as familiarly as possible, the impression left on me by my superficial experience at Talkham.

A GAME OF THIMBLERIG.

From the age of seventeen to three- or four-and-twenty, most young fellows think a great deal of themselves, much more than they ever do afterwards ; but the worst point in this fact is, that their conceit is generally displayed upon such subjects as they are least acquainted with. Parents of stern dissenting tendencies, as mine were, have the habit of keeping a tight hand on their offspring, so that should any wild blood exist in their veins, it asserts itself outrageously on the first opportunity which freedom gives it. A lad of seventeen, who has never been out alone after dark, and who suddenly finds himself master of his own actions five hundred miles from home, is likely, if not of a timid nature, to consider himself a very important and wide-awake gentleman, quite capable of taking care of himself and his affairs.

Thus, when an accident placed me in this position, tied as I had hitherto been to my mother's apron-strings, it is not very surprising that I got into a scrape—a scrape, however, that in the long-run was of the greatest possible service to me and several dear and valued friends.

This is how it happened. My father and mother lived at Stork House, Clapham Common, and I, an

only child, was carefully and rigidly educated, but entirely at home, first by my mother, then by a governess, and eventually by a tutor. I was far too precious an object to be committed to the rough handling of a private, much less a public, school.

In spite of this training I was very precocious. Though I never openly rebelled, I had very high spirits, and, if I may say it of myself, I think I was not a milk-sop. Any manly tendencies that I might naturally have had, though suppressed as being rough and vulgar by my earliest preceptors, were fostered, in a measure, by my tutor. I say in a measure, because even he was so trammelled by the religious prejudices of the house, that he dared not give me the benefit of many innocent and instructive pursuits and occupations. In our intercourse apart from study he, however—a thorough gentleman and man of the world—gave me the advantage of much of his wide-spread and diversified experience, all of which set me bitterly longing for the time when I should be able to do this or that free from the supervision of papa or mamma. I had but few companions of my own age, but of these the principal were two brothers named Branston, sons of a neighbour and friend of my father's. The liberty of action, however, accorded to them set many a barrier between our close intimacy. A desire to see for myself those pictures of life which were presented to me through their conversation was the chief result of our intercourse. The stables at Stork House were well filled, and the management of horses was about the only liberal pursuit

that I was allowed to indulge in; but it must not be imagined from this circumstance that the slightest element of sport was associated with it. Racing was never for a moment to be mentioned; indeed, when the Epsom week came round, all the blinds were studiously drawn down in the front of our house, which faced the great high-road to the downs, while none but the back rooms were used.

It was held to be little short of a crime for any of the inmates to show themselves in the garden and shrubbery which lay between the dwelling and the road. O, the longing at first to be allowed to see, and latterly to join in, that jolly rollicking throng, as through the windows the shouts and noise of the jovial revellers reached me!

I frequently managed to elude the laws of the house and gain a peep at the exciting scene of 'the road' through the thick holly hedge bordering the shrubbery above mentioned. Latterly I had made a habit of this. I remember well that it was on a Derby-day, and just before the great home-coming crowd was at its thickest, that from my little point of observation, cunningly selected so as to be unseen from house or road, I noticed a group of men collect just under the hedge where I was. One of these men sat down on the bank, placing a small square board on his lap, producing at the same time three thimbles and one little pea, which he began to move about dexterously on the board, now disclosing, now hiding the pea with the thimbles, uttering in the most voluble manner the whole while

a jargon quite new to my youthful ears. The other men instantly began to bet in a noisy manner as to which thimble the pea was under. A crowd gathered round them, and I became an excited spectator of the art and mystery of 'thimblorig.'

In those days this ingenious and instructive amusement was an accompaniment to every raceground, and its vicinity winked at, if not absolutely encouraged, with many other abominations, by the law. Of its swindling blackguardism I then knew nothing; and, in my innocence, as I gazed on the scene, I was chiefly struck by the stupidity, as it seemed to me, of the bystanders in not at once detecting under which thimble the pea rested at the conclusion of the shuffle.

I longed every now and then to give the necessary hint of where I felt sure it must be. With great difficulty I restrained myself from doing so. Only at rare intervals did any of the crowd make a right guess and win the stake, whilst in my knowingness I fancied I could have won every time. Not for the money's sake, for that I cared nothing; it was about the only thing at Stork House in which there was liberality, for we were very rich, and I might break the knees of a pony that had cost my father eighty guineas yesterday, and he would present me with another to-morrow worth a hundred, with scarcely a murmur of disapprobation. No, I wanted to win for the sake of winning, for the sake of showing how clever and sharp I was, and I became irritated to a degree at not being in a position to prove my superiority over the crowd of idiots, as I

deemed them, at my feet. Often after this I beheld a similar scene; but it is needless almost to say that, from the prejudices of my home, I was obliged to keep all these experiences to myself; nevertheless they dwelt in my mind, and brought their result.

In the autumn of the year in which I reached my seventeenth birthday it was arranged, by the advice of my tutor, that I should go for a tour through Scotland with him. He had persuaded my parents, with considerable difficulty it is true, that 'home-keeping youths have ever homely wits;' but the confidence reposed in Mr. Tuxford was very great, and after many discussions, and assurances on his part that he would take every care of me, my first excursion free from the parental guard was settled. Mr. Tuxford had relations in the north, whither he started for the beginning of his holiday alone. The railway was just open to Perth, at which fair city I was to meet him, for he had shown there was no difficulty in my reaching that distant spot by myself, seeing that I could be put into a carriage at Euston-square which would go right through to my destination without a change; indeed, if it were necessary, I could be locked in. I remember his saying this with a slight touch of irony, an objection being raised by my mother about distance, &c.

Family affairs kept the anxious parents in the neighbourhood of London that autumn, or I firmly believe to this day the arrangement would never have been entered upon. As it was, I was consigned one evening, almost with a label round my neck, to the

...the mail-train for the ... I fretted, ... passengers should ... and excited ... at 10 o'clock the ... the train ... the dignity of ... I was for ... at least for ...

...had been ... at its various ... was expected ... awaiting the ... the hole of his ... he was no- ... had elapsed, ... the air of a ...

...was not Elton, ... from my ... said that it ... country, ... the mail would ... I ... to perform ... by yourself; there can be ... I would not have allowed any- ... original plan. Go direct to the Athol Arms, and if I have not arrived, order dinner

at seven, by which hour I will be with you without fail; our rooms are already secured.'

Glorious! Complete independence for at least another twenty-four hours! I need not detail the various modes by which I asserted my dignity. Enough that I thought I did so to perfection, and the following afternoon I found myself on the seat of the Well-horse, Perth and Inverness day mail-coach, as it dashed over the old bridge, and pulled up at the Athol Arms, Dunkeld.

My preceptor had not arrived (here was a further respite from control), but I carried out his instructions respecting the dinner, and, without any very definite purpose, strolled on to the picturesque bridge which crosses the Tay at this point. Though not of a reflective habit, nor particularly susceptible to the beauties of Nature, I yet could not fail to be struck by the quiet charm of the scene before me. Looking up the stream that came tumbling along its rocky channel with a refreshing sound falling on the summer air, I had the thick pine woods of the Duke of Athol's estate on my right, behind which the afternoon light was beginning to redden, whilst a high-road following the windings of the stream led enticingly away under towering trees into the distance on my left.

Reading, walking, and sketching were to be our chief occupations. Tuxford would fish probably, and I looked forward with keenness to being initiated into the angler's art. But there had been a tacit understanding between ourselves that such worldly pursuits

were best not touched on at Clapham. They could only lead to a discussion which would probably end in their interdiction.

Some two hundred yards up the stream was a disciple of Izaak Walton's, whipping away with his line one of the many deep still pools of the river. In theory I knew all about fly-fishing, but this was the first time I had ever seen it practised. A desire to get a closer view of his proceedings induced me to cross the bridge and follow for a short distance the road just referred to. I had gone but a few yards along it when I heard a hastening step behind me, and a rather showily-dressed man came briskly up, saying, 'I think that fellow has hooked a big fish, we can see him from this bank, come along!' and he broke into a run as he passed on. Excited by this remark, I followed him at the same pace. He dashed into a copse lying between the road and river, and in another minute we were in full view of the capture which ensued of a very fine trout. Depositing the prize in his basket, the fisherman went yet a little higher up the stream, and turned his attention to other pools, but now with no success. Watching him for a considerable time from the bank where we had seated ourselves, my companion chatted on agreeably enough, first about the sport of fly-fishing, with which it struck me he did not appear to be very well acquainted, though he spoke somewhat boastfully of his many successes in the art, and then descanted upon the surrounding localities. With these he was evidently more familiar.

‘Been to the Rumbling Bridge?’ he asked. ‘Stunning place that—one of the lions of these parts—seen it, perhaps?’

‘No, I have only just arrived.’

‘O, indeed—ah! it was you I saw get off the box of the mail just now. I did not twig you at first. Bound north, I suppose?’

‘Yes,’ I said hesitatingly; ‘I am expecting to meet a man here this evening, with whom I am going to walk.’

‘Ah! very enjoyable thing. I am on my way up into Sutherlandshire; a great friend of mine, Sir Percy Binks, has got a moor there this year—wants me to shoot over it. My regiment is at Dublin, and as I’ve got a month’s leave, I’m going. You shoot, of course?’

Now, somehow I felt my dignity slipping from under me in presence of this man, and that I could not afford; so I did not hesitate to preserve it at all hazards, and after an instant’s hesitation I replied, in my most self-confident tone,

‘O, yes, a great deal when I’m at home.’

‘Live in the south no doubt?’ he went on. ‘They tell me birds will be very scarce this year. How are they with you?’

‘O, plenty of them about us,’ I replied; but I hoped he would not continue this topic much further, for lying was not my habit, yet I was afraid my importance could not be preserved if I did not resort to it. His remarks, however, here took a turn which was still worse for me to contend against. He pulled a case

from the breast-pocket of his shooting-coat, took from it a cigar, offering me one at the same time.

‘Have a weed?’ said he; ‘no doubt you smoke?’

Would to heaven I had achieved that manly habit! but I dared not trust myself. I knew Tuxford must discover it, and worse, I knew it would make me ill; for a year back only I had essayed to smoke the half of a cigar that had been given me by one of my Clapham companions to whom I have alluded, and an afternoon of intense agony in a remote cowshed in our meadow was the result. I therefore declined my new-found friend’s civility with the excuse that I was just going to dinner.

‘Dinner!’ he said; ‘why, what time is it? My watch has stopped; you’ve got one, let me see,’ and he made a movement as if he were going to take it from my pocket, but glancing at the hour myself, he withdrew his hand, while I replied, ‘A little past five.’

‘Why, what time do you dine? Not before seven, do you? Well, never mind, if you won’t smoke, let’s have a walk; that fellow won’t take any more fish to-night,’ said he, rising as he spoke. ‘Let us stroll on to the Rumbling Bridge. I know the way, it’s not far; beautiful evening, and you’ve lots of time.’

With a sense of relief, from his not pressing his cigar upon me, I hailed with alacrity the idea of thus filling up the interval before dinner.

Now I knew from the guide-book that there were two ways of getting to the Rumbling Bridge from

Dunkeld: one over the hills on the right bank of the Tay, the other by the road on the left, where we were. My companion urged that we should go by the hills, as it was by far the prettier route. I contended that, as evening was coming on, we had better stick to the road; and he unwillingly assented, saying, 'Well, we can go one way, and come home by the other.'

As we walked, his tongue never ceased rattling, and though much amused by him, I could not help fancying that he now and then used expressions new to me, and clipped his words in a way that I had never heard before. But what was not new to me in those days! Still, to inexperienced eyes, there was nothing objectionable in his appearance: a little horsey perhaps, but my associations with the stable had reconciled me to this, for despite my education, a secret love for sport had grown up within me. My talkative friend wore a thick dark moustache and whiskers, then by no means so common an appendage as now; but having spoken of his regiment, I knew of course that as an officer he was privileged to wear them, and mightily proud I felt of my association with the service. He had rather a good-looking face, sharp black eyes, slightly aquiline nose, with a figure not very tall, but broad-shouldered and thick set. As I have hinted, he was showily dressed, with a profusion of jewelry, and a startling amount of rings was displayed on his large red hands. Poor simpleton that I was! an officer, indeed! could I have beheld him with eyes but a few years older I should have thought him as much like an Esquimaux as a

well - trained gentlemanly officer belonging to her Majesty's army.

We had by this time reached a turn in the road, which brought us under the shadow of the surrounding hills.

It was a gloomy solitary place, particularly in the waning autumn evening light. Halting here, my companion remarked, 'There's no end of an echo in this place; let's try it;' and putting the knuckles of his two first fingers to his mouth, he sent forth a shrill whistle, which echoed backwards and forwards very faintly for a second or two. It was a very low taste, I daresay, but I wish to disguise nothing, and often had I longed to accomplish this feat, with which my observations of the Derby highway had made me familiar, and I gazed with admiration on the performer. He repeated the whistle sharply three times, and I fancied that the echo of the last seemed louder, unnatural, and a little out of time. 'Very good, isn't it?' he said, and we continued our way. Hardly any one was about; a few farm-labourers close to Dunkeld were the only people we had met, but a little farther on sat an old gentleman quietly reading by the bank of the river. He was of reverend appearance, with white neckcloth, broad-brimmed hat, and spectacles, but he did not seem to notice us as we passed. The Rumbling Bridge was reached; it was a likely looking place for fishing, but beyond this it did not impress me, for I was far too much engrossed by the entertaining gossip of my new acquaintance. The return route was again a matter of much discussion

between us ; but as my internal sensations told me that dinner-time was approaching, I insisted on keeping to the road, as the shorter way home, to which, after much parleying, my companion reluctantly assented. His temper was a little ruffled, but he recovered in the course of a few minutes, and was soon rattling on as pleasantly as ever. Just before we arrived at the bend of the road where the echo was, I thought I saw in the distance a man crossing the river from the other side by the aid of some stepping-stones ; but a promontory of rock cut him off from my view almost as soon as I had sighted him. I therefore took no notice of this trivial circumstance ; but it had its significance, I found, when I had time to reflect on what followed.

‘Hallo ! what are those chaps up to ?’ was the sudden and surprised observation of my companion, as, in a few minutes, we wound round the solitary spot where he had excited my admiration by his whistle. ‘O, here’s a lark ! thimblerig, by jingo !’ Then stopping suddenly, and placing his hand affectionately on my arm, he said, ‘Now, you’ll excuse me, but you are a nice young fellow, and I’ve taken a kind of fancy to you : I shouldn’t like you to come to harm while you was with me, but p’r’aps I’ve seen a little bit more of the world than you. Now that’s as rascally a plant as ever I came across.’

‘What’s a plant ?’ said I, betrayed for a moment by curiosity out of my assumed knowingness. He replied, smiling,

‘Why, don’t you see that fellow is trying to hook a couple of flats? One of them is that old parson cove that we passed just now while he was reading, and the sharper has laid out his little game to catch just such chaps as him. Come along, we’ll have some fun with ’em.’

Sure enough, as I looked where he pointed, there in this unlikely place I saw the ‘little game’ going on, with which as a spectator I have shown I was familiar.

‘Don’t you be afraid,’ continued my worthy guide; ‘you come and put your money down like a man, and I’ll be bound you go home richer than you came. I’m up to the rig, and have won pots at it in my time; could do it myself once; perfectly safe when you know it.’

We were now approaching within a dozen yards of the knot of three men, from whom I could hear proceeding the usual jargon. Here was an opportunity indeed not to be resisted of showing my cunning, and indulging for the first time in my sporting propensities. Moreover, could I not rely on the assistance of the friendly man of the world, who, by his knowledge of the game, had shown me he was wide awake? Go in and win! of course I would. Nothing would please me better; and I entirely forgot in this excitement the qualms of hunger which the beauties of the Rumbling Bridge had failed to stifle.

‘Here you are, with your one, two, three, and your three, two, one; three thimbles and one little pea; Lor’ bless your soul, I wuldn’t tell ye a lie for all the money;

but I'll lay either o' you gents five, ten, fifteen, or an even twenty sovereigns you don't tell me which thimble the pea is under. If the 'and is quicker than the heye, why I win, and you lose; but if the heye is quicker than the 'and, why you win and I lose,' &c. &c. And the shuffle is concluded, and the thimbles stationary at the moment we join the group.

'A sovereign it's under this,' says one of the lookers-on, a square-built dark man, really not very unlike my companion in appearance. As he speaks, he tips over with his finger a thimble—there is no pea.

'I told you 'twas not that, sir,' continued the other bystander, who was indeed the same reverend-looking gentleman with white neckcloth, spectacles, and broad-brimmed hat, that I had noticed seated on the bank.

'Never mind,' says the owner of the board, resuming the shuffle, 'win it back this time, sir,' as the loser hands over the stake.

Again a slight oration, and once more the thimbles come to a standstill.

'Now, sir, you try your luck,' to the clerical gentleman, who replies in a soft bland voice,

'Thank you, no, I never bet; but I am amused to see the dexterity you display.'

'Just as you like, sir, there ain't no harm in looking; a cat may look at a king. P'r'aps one o' you gents' (to us) 'would like to try your fortune?' and the thimbles are again rattling rapidly over the little table, and again the shuffle ceases.

'There,' said my friend, turning to him who had

just lost, 'now you can win it back again safe as a gun,' and advances his hand.

'No, no, don't touch 'em,' says the owner. 'Which gent is a-going to bet, let me understand?'

'Why, neither now, I should think,' says he who had first lost the money; 'you've moved them again.'

'No, I haven't!'

'But I say you have; hasn't he, sir?' appealing to my friend, who replies, 'Rather!'

'Now, gentlemen, pray do not quarrel,' interposes the clerical spectator.

'Well, I don't want to deceive no one; now keep your eyes open. There's the pea, there it ain't! Now, be quick, look alive, it's only heye against 'and! There! now who's going to say which thimble it's under?' and the movement is once more stopped. My friend and the other shout simultaneously,

'I'll bet a fiver it's this!'

'Done,' says the owner. 'Now hands off, hands off,' and a wrangle again ensues; but the thimbles are not this time touched. 'Now, sir' (to me), 'you see fair, you lift up the thimble when these gents has put their money down.'

The five-pound notes are produced, and I am directed by the two sportsmen to raise a particular thimble, which I do; sure enough the pea is under it!

'There, I told you so,' they exclaimed, and he of the table at once hands over five sovereigns to my friend, and a five-pound note to the other player.

'All fair, gents—quite right—there's your money—now try again.'

My friend whispers to me, 'Now *you* have a go in this time ; don't be afraid, I'll put you on the right one.'

The proceeding is repeated, I stake my money—two sovereigns. This time our reverend companion is asked to raise the thimble that my friend indicates for me.

'Right again ; you've won your money, sir !'

So I have ; I am actually two pounds to the good. I am delighted ; I was quite sure of winning, there could be no doubt. So the scene proceeds for a considerable time. It is now getting almost dark ; but I am very excited, only losing now and then, through an occasional blunder of my guide's. Had I been left to myself, I believed I should never have failed. The stakes increase in value.

'We sha'n't be able to see much longer, crowd it on this time and smash him up at once,' is another whisper from my acquaintance.

I had no time for thought ; the bet was fifteen pounds. I raised the thimble myself ; I could have sworn the pea was there, but it was not !

'Ah !' says my man, 'I thought you were wrong ; don't be in such a hurry, keep cool ;' for since the mistakes he has made I have taken the play somewhat out of his hands.

'Just time for one more round,' says the presiding genius. 'Now, be careful.'

I hardly know what money I have in my pockets,

but I take out notes and gold, and stake it all ; for this time I can almost see the pea.

‘Now, don’t hurry, I tell ye ; let this gent’ (to the parson) ‘see fair again ; tell him which is your thimble.’

‘That’s it,’ say I ; and once more the non-better raises the one I point to, but as he does so, I plainly see him very dexterously remove the pea. Of course I have lost. I am furious, not about the money, but because I see the cheat. I say so, and refuse to hand over the stake.

‘What do you mean by that, young fellow ?’ from one side of me. ‘That’s a likely joke,’ from the other.

‘Pay up, pay up,’ from my friend ; ‘you’ve fairly lost!’

‘I won’t though, by Jove,’ I reply.

‘O, we’ll see about that ! Now then, bonnet him, Bob!’

A violent blow falls on the crown of my wide-awake, which drives it over my eyes ; at the same instant a wet handkerchief, smelling of apples, is thrust under my nose. I feel dizzy and faint, I stagger and fall, and I remember nothing more.

‘What’s up wi’ ye, sir ? what’s up wi’ ye ?’ were the broad Scotch accents which fell upon my ear as I lay prostrate on the road, aware that some one was endeavouring to raise me. ‘What could hae brought ye to this ? hae ye tumbled doon in a fit, sir ? or was it the wusky, eh ?’

A moment or two restored me to a sense of my position, and recovering more rapidly than might have

been expected, I struggled to my feet. There was still some light in the sky, so I could not have been long unconscious.

‘Here’s yer hat, sir; ye was amaist bleended wi’ it, as I cam’ by ye. Are ye hurt?’

No, I was not hurt, only shaken and stupefied; but my watch, breast-pin, money, sleeve-links, all were gone! I saw at a glance what had happened.

‘Tak’ a wee drap o’ this, sir,’ and the stranger offered me a flask, which I did not hesitate to put to my lips. The whisky did me good; and there was nothing for it now but to face Mr. Tuxford, and confide my discomfiture to him. I dreaded doing so certainly; but it was a very different feeling from that which would have accompanied my disclosure if I had been nearer Clapham.


‘We are not far from Dunkeld, are we?’ I inquired of the man standing in front of me.

‘Na, na; a wee bit ower half a mile. I’m gaun there mysel’, if ye wad let me show ye the way.’

‘Well, yes, as it’s rather dark you may, though I think I know it.’

‘Yes, yes, ye’d better come along wi’ me; you might tak a wrang turn, and get up on the hill.’

A quarter of an hour after this I was crossing the bridge with my good Samaritan. He told me, as we walked, that he was a groom out of place, and that he would be very thankful if I could give him a trifle for having assisted me, after my discomfiture. He did not press his inquiries as to what had brought me to it,



and naturally I did not volunteer the information. I told him to wait at the door of the hotel, and I would give him something. I pass over the recapitulation of my adventure to Mr. Tuxford, whom I found, with the servants of the inn, of course in a great state of anxiety at my absence. I disguised nothing, whilst he replied with all that was appropriate to the occasion. As I had come to no further harm than the loss of my money, &c., he did not show much anger, and inwardly, I believe, thought the whole thing likely to prove a beneficial lesson. I explained, at the conclusion of my narrative, that I must reward the groom who had just assisted me.

‘Certainly,’ said Mr. Tuxford; ‘ring the bell, and send the man a sovereign; you might have been in the road all night if it had not been for him. Yet no,’ he continued, ‘we will go down into the passage and have a look at the fellow;’ for, after what you have told me, it is not at all improbable that he is also one of the gang.’

With this, we walked into the hall of the hotel, and sent for the man, who was sitting on the doorstep. The full light of the lamp fell upon him as he stood before us, twirling his cap in his fingers. He looked thoroughly what he had described himself, and truly Scotch, with high cheekbones, short-cut red hair, and small red whiskers. He was quite a stripling, apparently not more than twenty years of age.


My tutor faced him with a resolute stare for several minutes, under which the man evidently winced, while

muttering a few hopes for my welfare. I said nothing, but I fixed the fellow's face very firmly in my mind.

'You shall not have a halfpenny,' was Mr. Tuxford's cool remark; 'and if you take my advice, the sooner you and your companions get out of this country the better, and think yourself precious lucky that you are able to do so.'

The man raised a whining protest, rendered the more hypocritical by his over-strained accent, and slunk out of the house.

'Not a doubt of it,' continued Mr. Tuxford, as we reëntered our sitting-room; 'one of the gang to a certainty. These sharpers and swell-mobsmen have their hangers-on and agents in every town in the kingdom. No, you have spent quite money enough over this little bit of experience.' He then took upon himself to give me a short lecture, which embraced some amusing accounts of the fraternity, showing how it clung together; burglars, pickpockets, swell-mobsmen, sharpers, thieves of all degrees, but each having his separate branch in the profession. 'Your friend of the Rumbling Bridge,' said Mr. Tuxford, 'is probably at the top of the tree, being a clever fellow; but if he were to be down on his luck at any time, as the slang goes, he would not hesitate even to encroach on his burglarious brother's province. The rest were confederates—the reverend gentleman, as you describe him, the other player, thimblerriggers all; this groom is possibly not very bright, and can only be trusted for just such offices as he performed for you. A spy, in fact, who helps him-



self when he can, graduating for higher things by and by. Evidently the path by the hills, being more retired, would have suited their plan better; that is why your guide tried to induce you to take it, and the man you saw on the other side crossing the river was scouting, having been put on the alert by the whistle.'

But I need not pursue my admonitor's discourse any farther; this is sufficient for the purpose of my narrative.

We had a very pleasant tour through Scotland, and of course it was deemed prudent never to confide my adventure to the anxious hearts at Stork House.

Eight years after these circumstances had happened, and when they, with other youthful follies, had nearly faded from my memory, I found myself once again on the road to Scotland. This time, however, I was bound no farther than the neighbourhood of Edinburgh, and on a very different mission. Time had worked its changes, and I had become not only my own master but that of Stork House as well, and I was about to bring home to it a new mistress. My wild oats were sown, and I expected in the course of another month to be a respectable married man. The 'lady of my love I dare not name,' so I shall merely say that she was staying at the country seat of a mutual friend (in fact no other than one of the companions of my early Clapham days) not far from the village of Prestonpans, and near to the station of Tranent. Having been invited to join a large party staying in the house, I was going to enjoy the combined delights of love-making

and partridge-shooting. So, on a bright morning early in September, I was journeying on this pleasant errand by the Great Northern line direct to Edinburgh.

On resuming my seat after getting some luncheon at Newcastle, I found the opposite corner of the carriage, hitherto unoccupied, filled by a rather shabbily-dressed, yet good-looking portly man. He was close shaven, with the exception of a tuft or imperial on his chin, which with his hair was slightly gray. Settling into my place, I saw he was gazing very intently at me, which circumstance evoked a scrutinising glance in return from myself. The guard was whistling for the recommencement of our journey. The engine was answering with its preliminary shriek, when my opposite neighbour suddenly rose, opened the door, sprang out, said something to the guard, who, as the train began to move, hurried the man into another carriage. This seemed rather a funny proceeding, and it then occurred to me that I certainly must have seen the fellow before, yet I could not for my life remember how, when, or where. The whole thing happened so rapidly that I had no time to make any close observation of his dress or figure that might have helped my memory in this respect. For a while I puzzled myself in the way one does when one comes across a face that awakens vague recollections. I got quite annoyed about it; I looked out of window at the next station in the hope of seeing the traveller again, but he was not visible, and eventually I sank back to the perusal of my novel, and forgot all about him.

I slept in Edinburgh that night, and reached Trent by one o'clock the next day. Getting my gun-case and luggage together, I was the last person to leave the platform; but as the dog-cart that was in waiting to convey me to Cawse Grange whirled away from the station, we overtook two persons arm-in-arm, who were walking from the train. One of these in particular caught my attention; it was the same man whose face had so puzzled me at Newcastle. I turned to look at him, but my vehicle went so fast round a bend in the road that he was lost to view as I did so. For a little while I again gave myself up to wondering where the deuce I had seen the fellow before, but with no better result.

The arrival and welcome, which soon followed, drove everything else from my mind. Hospitable William Branston himself led the way to my room.

'Now don't be long, Charlie, old boy; luncheon will be ready in half an hour; there's a mount for you which will carry you anywhere that Kate will give you the lead,' said he, as he left the room.

This remark had reference to a riding party which had been arranged to come off in the afternoon. A minute afterwards my host returned, shutting the door quietly behind him.

'By the way,' he said, 'I forgot to caution you; it seems a very funny thing to say to a man in one's own house, but the fact is for the last fortnight a series of petty robberies have been going on here, and we have been unable to trace the thief. Many attempts have

been made, and we shall succeed at last in catching him or her, no doubt; but, in the mean time, don't leave anything valuable about. Just turn the key of your portmanteau, you understand. It's very awkward, but this is all that can be done.'

These precautions I took, and in due time stood ready with the rest of my friends on the steps in front of the house, as the horses were being brought round.

Katherine, I must record, was a first-rate horse-woman, and I believe no vainer little creature existed than she when mounted on her pet blood-mare, Baby.

Our cavalcade was ready to start. I only waited to lift my love into her saddle, Baby being the last horse led from the stable. The animal's points so riveted my attention that it was not until Kate was safely seated that I cast a glance at the groom who held the beast. As I did so our eyes met. One of the queerest sensations I ever experienced then flashed through my brain; in a moment I recollected where I had seen the fellow who left the railway carriage the day before, and about whose identity I had been so puzzled. The whole thing came back to me, as if it had happened last week; the groom was no other than the red-haired Scotch vagabond who had found me lying in the road near Dunkeld; my railway companion, in spite of his shaven face, stood out clearly to my recollection as the Mentor who had initiated me into my first game at thimblérig.

I mounted my steed, pondering over the matter as

we rode away. It could be no accident that brought these two men into the same neighbourhood at the same time; for had I not seen my quondam officer-friend of eight years since, at Tranent Station, only two hours ago? No! this was no accident, and it was a direct means of accounting for the petty larceny mentioned as going on at Cawse Grange.

During the ride I took an opportunity of communicating my suspicions to Branston, with a slight outline of their foundation.

‘This is very curious,’ said he. ‘Do you mean to say you suspect John Leasher there? He has been in my service certainly but just a fortnight.’

‘I do suspect him,’ was my unhesitating reply; ‘and do tell me, where did you get him from?’

‘Well, in truth, I had only a written character with him, and that was signed with the name of Percy Binks, who, the fellow told me, was a baronet, in the habit of renting a moor every year in Sutherlandshire; and being hard pressed for a servant at the time, I took his word for it.’

‘Ho! ho!’ cried I, ‘I’ve heard of Sir Percy Binks before; he’s a myth to a certainty; this settles the question.’

Branston went on, saying, ‘Well, but the man is hardly ever in the house, except when I send for him of an evening to give him orders for the next day.’

‘Never mind,’ I answered; ‘rely on it, if you don’t keep a sharp look-out, there will be a big burglary, or robbery of some kind, committed in the house—more

than this, before very long too ; these fellows lose no time.'

'What would you advise, then ? Do you think either of them recognised you ?'

'The groom did not, I am sure,' I answered ; 'but I am equally certain the other rascal did yesterday ; that is why he got out of the carriage in such a hurry when he saw me. Doubtless I have changed less in appearance than he, though my whiskers have come and his are gone.'

'Send to Edinburgh for detectives—do you recommend that ?' said my host, pondering.

'No,' I continued, 'that might excite suspicion ; if you will allow me to advise I would lay a trap. We are five stalwart gentlemen here, and we could effect a most exciting capture, throw our net over the whole covey at once, for there are three or four of them in it, you may depend. I'll think over my plan a little, and when the ladies leave the dinner-table to-night, I will tell you what I propose.'

This I did, and when the time arrived, took the rest of Mr. Branston's guests into my confidence. After calm deliberation, the following course of action was decided on. The house was so built that any one innocent even of all burglarious intentions could easily understand that the library window was its vulnerable point. It opened down to a short flight of steps, which led on to the lawn. In this room at night, when the ladies were gone to bed, the smokers were wont to resort. We were to be all rather tired, and not inclined for

tobacco on this occasion, with the exception of Mr. Branston and one of the guests, who were to light up their cigars about eleven o'clock. John Leasher was then to be sent for as usual, to take some orders about the stable, particularly with reference to Baby, which beauty was under his especial care. The weather being fine, and yet warm, the window before referred to was to be left open; but just as John would be leaving the room Mr. Branston was to call him back, and tell him to close the shutters. During this process great care was to be taken not to look at his movements. The fastening, however, was afterwards to be examined, and should it be found that it was firmly secured, with the swinging bell hooked on to the bar, we were to conclude that no attempt would be made that night. If, on the other hand, the fastening should be carelessly done, and the bell not set in position, why, we must prepare for action. A signal would then be given which was to bring us each quietly from our rooms down to the library, where, well armed with life-preservers, and a strong rope or two, we were to hide ourselves, three behind the large folding screen, and one on either side of the window, shrouded by the curtains. Thus in ambush we were to be patient, and, above all, silent. The gang once well within the room, at another signal we were to make a rush for it, and with little mercy secure our men. This may seem a gratuitous running into danger; but it was thought little need be apprehended, as it would be such a surprise that no material resistance could be offered. None of the servants were

in our confidence, as we did not know whom to trust. It must likewise be remembered that we were all young, strong, adventurous Englishmen, and there was a spice of daring in it, which was alone a great charm. For myself, it can be easily understood, it was invested with the attraction of revenge on the rascal who had played me the scurvy trick of the thimblurig confederacy.

After my disclosures and suspicions had been discussed over our wine and walnuts, no one felt surprised to hear the signal given for our assembling in the library. Master John had fallen into the trap, as if he had been the most simple of doves. He hardly fastened the bar across the shutters, and he never thought (how should he, poor innocent, so unused to indoor work!) of the bell, though he could not have closed the shutters without seeing it.


For two hours we anxiously waited in complete darkness, 'and the beating of our own hearts was all the sound we heard.' I am posted behind one of the curtains. At last, sure enough, footsteps outside are heard. Squeak goes the sash window-fastening, a slight jar, and the crowbar swings useless to and fro. Back goes the shutter, the light from the bull's-eye of a dark-lantern flashes straight into the room.

Softly, gently, in they come, one by one, four in all. John is not with them. O, dear, no! *he* is fast asleep in bed, this is not his line; but there goes *my* fellow, I know his broad shoulders. Mine are as broad now, and I am taller; besides, he has more weight to carry in front. This time I overmatch him. Now for

it; the signal is given, out we rush—man to man for a minute or two, with Branston to spare, and to hold up the fallen lantern.

On our side a few bruises, and a sprain or two, were the only evils attendant on the exploit. Two of the men were burly fellows, and but for the unexpected nature of the onslaught might have given serious trouble. They were pinioned, however, almost before they were aware of it. The third, a mere boy, was half strangled by the grip his adversary got of his throat, and it was like breaking a fly on the wheel. In grappling with my man we both fell to the ground, fortunately he under me. His head coming into collision with the corner of the fender he was rendered senseless almost before I could rise, so that after all I was in a measure cheated of my actual revenge, for the rascal never knew who was his antagonist, until I appeared against him in a court of justice. Messengers were despatched for the police. John Leasher was also given into custody on suspicion; but, unfortunately, we could make out no case against him; and the sneaking hound may probably even now be battenning on the skill and courage of his more daring brethren.

For the rest they had their deserts; and my satisfaction was that even the experiences of thimbleric had enabled me to render a most signal service to my friends at Cawse Grange.



LEAFLESS TREES.

‘ Like leaves on trees the race of man is found,
Now green in youth, now withering on the ground.’

CLOTHED in their summer mantle of grateful green, how very slight a hint is given by the trees of the anatomy that lies beneath—of the skeleton upon which the muscle and tissue, as it were, of buds and leaves are hung!

On a bright quiet day in the middle of June, when every branch teems with luxuriance of foliage, when the spring leafage has become matured, and the secondary shoots are well established, and all Nature seems reveling in the glorious richness of fruition, how impossible it is to picture the country in one’s mind’s eye denuded of its gay trappings, and lying forlorn, bleak, and deserted under the dreary weather and chilling blasts of Christmas!

As in looking upon the ocean in its calmest hours, when, as Wordsworth has it, ‘the gentleness of heaven is on the sea,’ we find it difficult to conceive that that same placid, sapphire-like mass, spread out before us so treacherously quiet and inviting, can ever be heaved into furious surging billows, that carry death with

them at every bound, in like manner the aspect of trees in midsummer appears so totally antagonistic to that which they bear in midwinter, that sometimes a strong effort is necessary to realise in the slightest degree a change which we know to be inevitable, but which all our experience and consciousness fail to force visibly upon our imagination. Blue sky, sun shining, sheep-bells tinkling, grasshoppers quizzing, leaves gently rippling in the soft warm air, grateful shade, refreshing green, thin coats, straw hats, no umbrella, no goloshes, no fear of catching cold;—how ridiculous is the thought that all this beauty and enjoyment will vanish, so to speak, with the wave of a magician's wand, and that a few months have but to elapse, when, hey, presto! what have we?

In the south-east corner of the Regent's Park, opposite Park-square in fact, a few hundred yards south of where the Coliseum once stood, and about fifty yards north of the then New-road, there existed, many years ago, an institution called the Diorama, which, to our infinite delight, we often frequented in our boyish days, and where were exhibited large pictures, admirably painted, and upon the dissolving-view principle, but so beautifully managed as to be quite free from the glaring and pantomime-trick sort of vulgarity which we now but too often see in modern entertainments of the kind. They were executed with great power and skill on a very large scale; all the known stage mechanism of that period, in the shape of transparencies, different-coloured mediums, &c., was brought to bear upon them

to assist in producing the illusionary effect, which was one, if not the chief, feature of the establishment. To us, at least, there was no difficulty in almost believing that we were gazing on reality; and it is to be questioned whether modern scene-painting and theatrical appliances, with all their artistic improvements, have ever gone beyond the completeness of these tableaux. In the changes through which they passed there was no hurry or rapidity; the transformations were all effected gradually and imperceptibly, and indeed the approaches to, and the room itself, in which the spectator sat, had an air of solemnity about them that was not lost upon our youthful imagination. There was but very little light, and coming in out of the bright streets it of course took some time before we could discern exactly where we were.

We were inspired with additional awe from the rotation or movement of the auditorium itself, for when one picture had been exhibited to its full the room was gently turned, until the front of it, which of course was wall-less, faced and fitted the proscenium and green curtain behind which the second picture to be shown was hidden; then, after a due and appropriate prelude of music, the curtain slowly rose, and when the tableau had passed through all its phases, and we had feasted our admiring eyes on it for a quarter of an hour or so, we were again moved back to the first picture, when this process was repeated, and continued throughout the hours of exhibition. If our recollection serves us, the room would have contained some two or three

hundred people but there were seldom more than a dozen present whenever we were there, and doubtless this latter fact led to a change overhauling the establishment which has become permanent; however this may be, we never pass the chapel or meeting-house, to which purpose the building is now consigned, without turning of the old days, or without recalling two or three of the pictures which from time to time were exhibited there.

We can remember the solemn aspect of a vast cathedral interior, standing in a cool, grey, mysterious light, which crept quietly between and round about the stately columns from the half-seen windows, falling here and there in broad flakes upon groups of the little rush-bottomed chairs which during the intervals of service are stacked away in masses. At the little altars and chapels stray tapers were burning, and up away at the end, beyond the choir, larger candles could be distinguished, shedding a warm but still obscure light on the gaudy trappings of the high altar itself. A confessional or two, in deep recesses of shadow, could likewise be discerned, and the figure of a kneeling woman near one of the columns formed a conspicuous point of dark in the midst of a broad patch of the morning light. There was a gloomy stillness about the place, and a hush on the part of the spectators, which fully bore out the reality of the scene.

The dim misty look of the aisles, the half-obscure effect of detail, which is seen—as the eye penetrates by degrees, and after it is well seasoned to the general

tone, the remoter recesses—were all reproduced with startling truth; nay, the very smell of the place, the *fade* and sickly odour of the stale incense, was even there; it was difficult to believe that we were not gazing in from the door of the edifice itself.

After an interval of unbroken quiet, the faintest possible peal from an organ is heard; our attention is for a moment diverted by this, and, as we look again up the nave, surely the light seems warmer; to confirm this impression we glance at a side chapel—yes, it is more distinct; and again, as our eyes fall upon the chief features, they are all more clearly revealed. A warmer glow is upon everything; and see, what is this? A group of figures have mysteriously made their appearance at the foot of yonder column; and the chairs?—what has become of the chairs? They have all disappeared, and there, spread out through the main body of the building, kneel masses and masses of worshippers, whilst at the altar stand the priests in their brilliant vestments.

Meanwhile, the sounds from the organ increase in volume; it is a glorious anthem they are playing, and there is an effect as of voices from the choir pealing up through the vaulted roof. Hundreds of tapers have burst into light in all directions; the whole place is aglow, and now incense, fresh burning incense, completes the illusion. By degrees, and after we have had time to realise the magnificence of the scene, the music dies away; semi-darkness again slowly sets in; and as imperceptibly as the ceremony of High Mass dawned upon us, so do we return, not to the cold gray of

the first effect, but to a third ; the solemn aspect of the cathedral now again hushed and still, as it lies under the fleckered gleams of silver moonlight, varied only here and there by a few inextinguishable candles burning before the sacred shrines.

Yes ; we never turn out of the dust and turmoil of the Marylebone-road without this picture rising vividly before us ; and, as we wander up through the Regent's Park, in front of the stuccoed magnificence of its terraces, or moon through its pretty and shaded garden-walks, the days of the Diorama exist for us still. We are still seated in that roundabout room, by which, after the curtain has fallen upon the moonlit cathedral, we are shifted face to face with some rural scene in the full glories of a summer sun. Now it would be an Alpine view, with châteaux and water-wheels and tinkling cowbells ; emerald-green meadows, walnut-trees, thick orchards, and clustering masses of pine-wood, surmounted by overhanging peaks of snow, and underlaid with yawning chasms and terrible descents. The sun would decline, and we should have all the effects of approaching night, the rosy tints of sunset upon the eternal snow fading gradually into the deep blue of the star- and moon-bright heavens. Tiny wreaths of smoke would creep from the chimneys in the village, until the shadows of deep night settled over all. Then there would be storm and thunder, and the roar of avalanches, glimpses only of the scene now and again appearing as the lightning flashed, until at last we have the dawn growing into the full light of sunrise to show the havoc

that has been made ; for, lo ! an avalanche has engulfed the valley, and there is a sea of glittering snow, the tops of trees, the church-spire, chimney-pots, and the gabled roofs of cottages peering up, forlorn and isolated ; the only indications of the smiling landscape of half an hour before.

Another time — for of course these views were changed when that small portion of the British public which affected our pet institution required novelty — we would have some English peep, a silvan scene, with forest glades and bowring avenues, thick clustering woods, and foliage in profusion ; one of those pure, green, park-like pictures which speak with their myriad leafy tongues of home. Subjected then to transformations similar to those of the cathedral and the Alpine scene, this tableau passes through its various phases, for now the summer trees are waving under the full weight of their bright-green covering, and then there steals a golden tinge of autumn through their rustling robes ; the ground is strewn with falling leaves ; the verdant tints fade one by one away, and what remains of foliage on the stems is brown and gold and yellow, bright, gaudy, and fleeting. The frosts increase, and the eager nipping winds at last strip all the branches bare, leaving the whole scene around but a wreck and remnant of its former self, — a gaunt skeleton on which the wild weather may work at will, making the bones to rattle and creak in harsh accompaniment to the pattering rain.

These changes wrought at the Diorama sprang up

in our mind as we thought of the rapid transition from the extremest wealth of foliage to the abject poverty of the 'leafless trees,' a transition which every year seems to increase in rapidity. Time flies at such a pace as we advance in life that we appear no sooner in the midst of summer than it has flown, and we are back again to the dreary winter weather. Back again, it seems, almost with as little interval as lay between the shifting scenes which so delighted us as boys in the famous rotatory chamber. A gap of time, bridged over now as easily almost in half a year as then in half an hour; the cabalistic 'hey, presto!' of the magician flowing as glibly for us, and with nearly as quick results as ever. The magic and the mystery exist still; we look out upon the landscape, full and teeming, and, as we gaze, rich tints of autumn creep imperceptibly through the shimmering green. We but withdraw our eyes to make sure by reference to some little detail that this is so, and, as we look back again, the smiling country lies bleak and desolate, the trees stand bare and leafless.

'The melancholy days are come, the saddest of the year,

With wailing winds, and naked woods, and meadows brown and
sere.'

We, who in populous cities are pent, take little heed, perhaps, of 'leafless trees.' Save the occasional glimpses we have of them in passing through our squares and parks, or when business obliges us to take the return-ticket for a few miles' 'run' by rail, we seldom see them, and, if we give them a thought, it

frequently conjures up the country for us rather unpleasantly than otherwise. The country means for us generally a place to loll and lounge about in, where we spend our holiday, and do little but lie upon the grass, and smoke and read under the shade of some spreading oak or elm. The notion of it denuded of its leaves is too apt to give us a chill, and we fail to invest it with that beauty which in reality it possesses.

Yet, despite such ideas, the chances are that 'leafless trees' may still mean as much to us, if not a little more, when we think of them seriously, and may have quite as much charm in their aspect as if we lived, like Robin Hood, in a forest all the year round. Your countryman, as a rule, does not take so much notice of the change of seasons as the Londoner; winter and summer are to him but variations of his duties in the field and garden. The attractions to him of 'leafless trees' are merely in the indications which they bear of sport, and so far he loves midwinter better than when the copse or hedge is blind; beyond this he has but little feeling on the subject. The beauty of the long arching avenue on a bright December morning, when, sparkling with the moisture of the departed mists, every twig stands clearly revealed against the cloudless sky, and the fretwork of the naked branches casts a lace-like shadow on the ground, is lost on him; whilst, ten to one, the Londoner—if thrown by chance into such a woodland scene, or into one where the scathed and gnarled trunks rise majestically, with their thousand tributary boughs glittering with unnumbered frost-

diamonds or fringed with sparkling jets of rime, or, farther, weighed down by the accumulated snow—would be more struck by the picturesque beauty, however unimpressible he may be, than his rustic brother; he would be much more struck by the exquisite novelty of the sight, and its total dissimilitude to his ordinary rural impressions, than if he were accustomed to nothing but a country life. Sing the praises of it as you will, it is terribly prone to dull the power of appreciating the picturesque, curious as the fact may seem.

Setting art and artists out of the question, after all, 'leafless trees' will be held in greater reverence by the dweller in town than we at first may think. For him the city streets may contrast favourably on a bleak November afternoon with the forest-side at such a time; the hum and roar of the big city may sound more cheerful than the melancholy sighing of the wind through the bare branches; the bright gas-lights may shed a warmer glow than the weird streak of pale sunset in the west, behind the tall rook-nest-dotted elms, swaying to and fro; the club hall and dining-room may look more inviting than the sanded passage and the bar-parlour of the Chequers Inn; the crowded thoroughfares may suggest a pleasanter sense of life than that lonely road, with a solitary figure plodding wearily along; the activity and bustle may be more harmonious with his views of existence than the dreary quiet of the country-side; but, given anything like fair weather, plenty of daylight, stout lungs, and strong legs, and no residence in town shall debar your citizen

from seeing and enjoying to the utmost all the beauties of 'leafless trees.'

For him there shall be a charm in the contrast they present to his accustomed midsummer recollections, and, if of a reflective turn, they shall offer food and subject for his thoughts never dreamed of in the countryman's philosophy. Have we not most of us known in our time a leafless human tree or two—mere wintry withered ghosts; gaunt shrunken spectres of the summer of prosperity; stripped of their gay trappings, bankrupt alike in energy and success, deserted by the sunshine of friendship and social intercourse and the soft breezes of honeyed words, and left bare to the gloomy wretchedness of indifference or the merciless fury of active hate?

See yonder stately oak, with gnarled and knotted trunk, and far-extending arms, angular and sturdy! Lord of the forest, but yet in his very prime subject to the ruthless influence of the unerring seasons, and reduced, through no fault of his, to nakedness and poverty, in spite of his strength, equally with the slender birch or graceful ash. No more exempt than these from the storms of wind and frost which come to tear down the ample covering of his vernal days, those bright-green folds of Nature's drapery, which are, as it were, the testimonies of his wealth and vigour, giving him that robust bold aspect which in the summer looks imperishable.

Have we not known many a human parallel to this, many a prosperous gentleman, thus stripped of all that

made him bear his head so proudly, and with defiance of the blasts of time or the nipping unexpected frosts of Fate? Have we not seen his vitality, his sap, depressed and checked at the very moment when his freshness and his power seemed the strongest, and until he stood a leafless tree, shorn by misfortune of all that had made life dear? Hardy, indomitable, true at heart, persevering, and oak-like in all his qualities, he has yet succumbed to the uncontrollable and inevitable. By nature but little inclined to bend to the blast, his combat and his opposition have given him in his nakedness a wrinkled, seamed, uncouth, and angular bearing, but leaving withal a remnant of the old defiant look. He makes comparatively but little moan about his trials; cruel winds howl through his branches, as with the rest of his brothers in their leafless hours; but his skeleton rattles less than theirs—it is firmer knit, and has better hope of a future spring.

Gentler figures, too, are to be found in this forest scene; the delicate yielding silver birch, light, feathery, and graceful in all its movements, charming to look upon from every point, pure and bright as its name implies—surely we have seen a human parallel to her? Bending before the roughest weather, feeling all its keenness, yet springing up, gay and erect again, upon the slightest cessation of the blast. Do we not all know some loving tender woman of this sort, who, though of such different mould from the sturdy oak, yet somehow manages to keep her good looks and the freshness of her heart as long as he; who fights her fight

just as bravely as, and oftentimes with a better front than, many a stouter warrior, keeping her leaves through bitterest winds, and smiling through the tears which fall around, though her neighbours may well-nigh have given in, and scowl and lower in moody dejection? Even when at last the frosty Fates tinge her streaming tresses with gray, and bring her to the same dead-level of utter leaflessness, there is still a look of hope about her; her shrunken form is still graceful, and is less changed by the absence of its natural fulness than we might expect. Her delicate limbs and flowing boughs lose nothing of their elasticity, and her bright clear complexion, that true index of her healthy blood and cheerful spirit, begins to gleam upon the faintest show of sunshine.

Unhappily, she has some sisters—the elm, the lime, the sycamore, and many another well-looking dame in the heyday of their time, but who cannot bear adversity so well, who moan and make ado, and show but sadly in the wintry weather. These, also, we may come across should we have eyes to know them, as well as those lucky few, the evergreens, who have not even to endure a temporary time of leaflessness,—the pines, the holly, and the rest, those fortunate ones of the earth, on whom no frosts can work, who always keep their proper figure and becoming dress, or who only change to get more sturdy and more hard with age.

At many a corner of our crowded streets we may find ‘leafless trees,’ or we may jostle up against them in busy thoroughfares, scarcely noticing perhaps their

various, and oftentimes forlorn, condition. Pluming ourselves with satisfaction on the amplitude of our own leafage, we are too apt to forget how wintry the weather is to many of our brothers, and how impossible it is for us to say when the sunshine, to which we owe our freshness, shall be obscured—too prone to forget that, if leafless days should ever come, how we too may stand disregarded and alone; how the grateful shadow and protection which our thick green screen of prosperity now affords may be forgotten by those who were only too glad to seek the refuge and comfortable advantages it offered in its palmy days; how the shadow cast by the present ample foliage of our roof-tree may be no longer remembered when the bitter frosts of adversity, by stripping the branches bare, have reduced it to a mere network of shade!

Alas, unlike most of our forest friends, we human trees, when once stripped of our leaves, have seldom much hope of a returning spring. Sometimes—and we could wish that it was oftener—fresh buds and healthy vigorous shoots burst forth, and, in a way, we may recover some semblance of our former selves; but in most instances we rather resemble that ‘leafless tree,’ which in the forest stands bare and barren, whilst his brothers renew their verdant hues with the warm sunshine and long days.

That sort of ‘leafless tree’ perhaps is the truest parallel to what we mean. For years, it may be, he makes abortive efforts to spring into life again; here and there about his battered trunk and boughs bright flecks

of green appear. There is some life-blood in him yet; 'his leaf shall not wither;' he will strive and strive against all mischance to bear a goodly front, and hide his skeleton as he used to do before we knew it was so gaunt and obdurate. Vain struggles now to screen its whitened bones, flimsy pretexts, and make-believes, so shallow and so thin that they are seen through at a glance, the underlying even being more noticeable from the very endeavours made to conceal it. He waits bravely, however, for the woodman's axe: may we not take example from his courage, doing our utmost determinately to battle against affliction to the last?

Patiently, we too must wait for our woodman with his axe; but, like the sturdy old forest lord, there can be no reason why we should not, so long as the sap may rise at all, put forth, as he, the ever-renewing buds of hope.

ORDEAL BY TIME; OR THE MEMORABLE TRYST.

A Story of Two Epochs.

CHAPTER I. FIRST EPOCH.

FORTY years ago, as at the present day, the Royal Horse Artillery stationed at Canterbury were in the habit of going in the summer for target practice to the little village of Culverness, on the northern shores of Kent. The bleak flat piece of the coast so named, upon which stood a straggling group of fishermen's huts and a solitary inn, was, just about this time, first looked upon as a locality eligible for extension into a fashionable watering-place, and one or two isolated and ugly structures of the lodging-house pattern were beginning to spring up, in a timid uncomfortable way, along the first inceptions of esplanade and sea-walk. An odd shop or two asserted themselves at the corners of the intended rectangular streets, which were mapped out in the rudest fashion across corn and potato fields, and at the date to which I refer one family were actually in possession of, or lodging in, the only abode as yet finished and furnished.

A certain Miss Darrant, an elderly invalid lady, had, with her niece, acted as the health-seeking pioneer of

the new district, and had come over from Canterbury, nine miles off, for the benefit of the bracing air.

On a brilliant midsummer morning, about a month after Miss Darrant and her niece had been staying in their seaside lodging, two batteries of artillery rode into the place, and a target having been towed out to sea, the guns were got into position as usual, at the foot of a sloping green hill which rose from the general flat level of the shore, and gradually formed to the eastward of the village a series of more or less abrupt cliffs, surmounted by corn and clover. On this occasion the muster of the soldiery was considerably larger than usual. A small camp equipage accompanied them, and a tent was pitched conveniently on the sloping hill near the beach, the fine weather having evidently tempted the officers to combine the pleasures of a picnic by the sea with their gun practice. The heavy firing at the mark, which went on for an hour or more, of course drew to the spot odd groups of the stragglers and idlers about the place, who only dispersed when the practice ceased and the officers retired to the luncheon prepared for them within the tent. Men and horses were picketed on the slopes, and some of the former were dismissed for their relaxation to such pleasures as the embryo town might afford.

Thus the coast was soon again left to its normal solitude, and two hundred yards beyond the officers' encampment not a creature was to be seen—that is to say, by a mere casual observer ; but any one who had chanced to notice the young lady who, soon after the arrival of

the artillery, had strolled from the one occupied lodging-house on to the cliff tops with the rest of the lookers-on, and any one who had been attracted by her appearance, as few could have failed to be, and had continued to watch her, would have seen that she prolonged her walk far beyond the sloping hill, and had made her way by an easy descent on to the sandy shore, which was now being left clear for a great distance below the cliffs by the ebbing tide. They would have seen her, as the sound of the last gun died away, stop and look back, as if expecting some one. Then they would have seen her continue her walk just to where an angle in the coast shut off the backward view and left her in perfect solitude.

An attractive-looking girl, certainly, say of about twenty, a trifle above the middle height, slender but firmly knit in figure, with that carriage and elastic step which go only with perfect health and strength. A face somewhat too rigidly handsome to be entirely beautiful, but with large lustrous eyes and a tender sympathetic expression, which softened to a great extent the firm mouth, which, whenever the lips parted, displayed a brilliant set of teeth. The unbecoming fashion in which the hair was worn in those days did not rob it of its dark and silky beauty, and the equally unbecoming costume, with its short waist, short skirt, and poke bonnet, failed to detract from the charm of her appearance.

As she lingers on the lonely shore, the purpose for which she is there soon becomes evident; for from the

officers' tent, some quarter of a mile back, now strides forth a young soldier, who, amidst a few gay words from his companions, bends his way along the sands in the direction she has taken. The distance between the two speedily lessens. She returns towards the angle in the cliff, which at present shuts him from her view ; but ere she reaches it he rounds it, and they meet—not coldly, nor yet quite with the air of lovers. Hands were shaken and held firm-locked, and still, quite still, for a while, but at arm's length, whilst each looked half askance at the other, and murmured rather than spoke a few words of greeting. He moved forwards ; she turned and walked by his side, making motion as if about to take his arm ; then, checking herself, she folded her hands behind her and went slowly on, her face bent upon the ground. Neither spoke for some minutes ; she was the first.

‘I had your letter, Allan,’ she said hesitatingly.

‘I suppose so, or you would not have been here.’

‘Well, yes ; I think I might have come when I heard the guns.’

‘What ! whether you had been wanted or not ?’ he said, in a tone intended to be bantering, but which had a ring of seriousness in it.

‘Yes,’ she answered ; ‘and the more readily, perhaps, if I had doubted whether I was wanted. Perhaps it is doubt that now brings me, for I do not care much to be seen meeting you in this way.’

‘Doubt, Jessie ?’ he repeated, affecting an air of surprise.

'Yes,' she replied; 'I will be candid. I did not like your letter, the more because it seems to confirm suspicions which of late have come into my mind when I think of all my love for you.'

'Suspicions,' he said; 'of what?'

'Well, simply that you are changing; that you have changed in your feelings towards me.'

Now, for the first time, she looked up at him with her frank eyes, as she went on, 'Be honest, be open with me, Allan.'

'What a silly child you are! Women do get such queer fancies into their heads!' he said, but without meeting her look for more than a second.

'Women's fancies, as you choose to call that intuition which so often helps us to right conclusions, tell me that I am right now in what I say; and you will not, you cannot, deny it, if you are still the same truthful honest Allan I have ever found you. I say that for the last month or more, whenever you have been over from Canterbury to see me, I have noticed a gradual change in your manner—no, not your manner exactly, for you are just as kind, just as thoughtful for me—but I can't explain it—only there is a difference. I see it in a thousand little ways; you have no control over it yourself. I see you struggling against it, striving to keep it back; but yet it is there, Allan, there in your heart of hearts.'

'Upon my life, I don't understand you, Jessie. I declare I have no wish to change our—' he began.

'No,' she answered, 'you have no wish of your own

better self to change our relations—I give you credit for that—but there is a feeling more powerful than your own wish at work. You can't help its being more powerful than your wish, or even your will; but there it is. You don't like me less, I was going to say—you do not even love me less—I believe you will always like me—only the liking and the loving are becoming rather what you would give to a sister than to the woman you have thought of making your wife.'

'You are a strange odd girl,' he replied, still without looking at her; 'and how you have got hold of these ideas puzzles me, for I swear I love—'

'Nay, Allan,' she broke in, 'don't try to deceive me, because you are not deceiving yourself; you know what I say is true. I do not blame you for it because, I repeat, it is not your fault. One has always heard that men's feelings are different from women's in these respects: they are not as stable—they can't help it—a certain degree of fickleness is natural to them all; and where a man's character is good, true, and generous, as yours is, they perhaps do not affect his real worth. But a woman who has once had the deep passionate devotion of such a man laid at her feet, as you have laid it at mine, she cannot brook the falling off, the cooling in any degree, of such love; she hesitates to think of him as her husband, and this is why so much misery comes after marriage when the wife sees the change, the uncontrollable change. Now I see it in *you*, before we are married; and is it not better that I should see it now than hereafter, when it would be too

strong tides, which, as in most estuaries, ran very rapidly, becoming at certain points what are known as 'races.'

Some hundred yards beyond the spot where the two speakers had sat down, there rose a mass of high, brownish, clayey, perpendicular cliff, surmounted by the ruins of an ancient abbey. We have nothing to do with the traditions connected with it. When it was built it stood far back from the sea; but that great 'blue dragon,' as the ocean has been called, 'whose mission it is to eat up the land,' had been for centuries making such ravenous meals off it just here, that it would long ago have swallowed it up, ruins and all, had not the Trinity Board taken measures to preserve the towers of the edifice as landmarks for mariners. By dint of running out the aforesaid groynes in all directions, and by building a strong apron of sea-wall immediately round the base of the promontory on which the remains of the abbey stood, the tides had been so far stemmed as to prevent their doing more of late than nibble at the coast. Nevertheless, they had managed by degrees, here and there, to consume enough to form many a biggish bight or bay, and it was just in the middle of one of these that Lieut. Allan Hardwicke, R.H.A., and Miss Jessie Darrant found themselves ensconced.

To their right and left the horns of the bay, the natural termination of which was prolonged by the tall groyne on either hand, shut out the view, making their privacy more complete. It was a retired, not to say

lonely spot, and under the fair sky of that particular summer morning was well fitted for a lovers' tryst.

Too much occupied by their own emotions, they had taken as little heed, however, of the change creeping over the heavens as they had of all other outward matters. Wind, tide, land, and sky might not have existed for all they knew. Both had, for the last half hour, seemed simply to be drifting as in a dream; therefore it was nothing to them that the blue had turned into a leaden gray—that the dry sand over which they had passed ten minutes before was now covered by lapping tumbling wavelets, or that the quiet air was ruffled by gusty blasts.

Both talked on rapidly as they sat, and much to the same purport as hitherto : she showing him her willingness to sacrifice herself sooner than hold him to the engagement, of which her true woman's instincts told her he repented ; *he* accepting the sacrifice with what grace he could, yet not sparing nor attempting to defend himself—still, inwardly relieved that the initiative had been taken by her, and that he was free ; regretting, yet gratified ; ashamed of the advantage he had gained, yet honestly not willing to relinquish it ; admiring hers, but condemning his own conduct ; resting, in his perplexity and the conflicting emotions by which he was torn, on the hope that they might so part as to leave no tinge of acrimony anywhere.

Presently, as though he had suddenly remembered it, he drew from the breast of his thickly-embroidered

jacket a small purse-like pocket-book, saying, as he gave it to her,

‘One reason, by the way, for my writing to ask you to come and see me this morning was that I might restore this to you; you will find the whole amount in notes and gold. It was a pretty mean trick of mine to borrow it at all; but you knew how I was pressed, and now know me so thoroughly, that a little meanness more or less won’t weigh. The abominable stuff has been burning my fingers ever since I had it; but it’s all there, back again, thank Heaven! By jingo,’ he continued, as a distant military note was heard very faintly, ‘there’s the trumpet sounding the *assemblée*! I must get back at once.’

They rose, and beheld in a second their situation. Steep crumbling cliffs on three sides of them, and an angry rising sea in their immediate front, entirely shutting off the end of the groyne round which they had come into the little bay. He made light of it at first, saying they could easily mount over the woodwork where it joined the cliff, and proceeded to clamber up it, holding back his hand to help her to follow him.

‘Yes,’ he said, as he reached a height sufficient to enable him to look over, ‘it’s all clear this side; but it won’t be for long. Come along, Jessie; we have not a moment to lose. Take care how you tread; it’s awfully slippery—this seaweed is like ice.’

She had given him her hand, and was in the act of mounting after him, when, as he was just reaching the topmost ridge of the slimy beams, his foot suddenly

slipped, and he fell backwards with great violence upon the sand. He attempted to rise.

'I've broken my leg, sprained my ankle, or something,' he exclaimed. 'I can't stand;' and he again sank to the ground.

She was by his side at once, bending over him, inquiring, striving to help, making efforts even to lift him.

'Try and get back by yourself, Jessie. Don't lose a moment. You'll see some of our men if you can get over the groyne and up the slopes; call to them for help. There's plenty of time if you are quick; I cannot move.'

Firm of purpose and clear-headed, she hardly hesitated.

'But,' she said, 'I must try and get you up higher towards the cliff; you will be drowned if you lie here. Look! the sea is upon us even now.' And truly the first wreath of foam slid up at that moment over the sand to within an inch of the place where he lay.

'But the other side is clear, I tell you, for the present. Never mind me; get over the groyne and go for help.'

She made a final effort again to lift and drag him higher up on the shore. He did what he could to help himself, and they made a little progress; but at the best he could but crawl, and so much time was occupied with but slight result. A yard or two at the most was gained, and the sea followed them up foot for foot.

'Go, I tell you; for God's sake, Jessie, go! get

over the groyne! On the other side the cliffs slope so gradually that you can get up them; here it is impossible,' and he gave a hopeless look at the all but sheer wall rising above him.

Then she flew to do his bidding, and in a moment had scrambled to the topmost ridge of the groyne.

'Ah, I am too late!' she cried; 'there is deep water here now—deep water all round us, everywhere!' And she called aloud for help, in the hope that some one on the cliffs above might hear her.

But the surges had begun to moan and shriek, and the wind to whistle, so that her voice vanished into air even as she raised it. Standing at this elevation, with the angry waters swirling and leaping up at her feet, and with the frowning cliff immediately above her, she, for the first time, realised to the full their danger. For the moment she was tempted to spring off, and wade or swim to the sloping cliffs; but a look back recalled her to the peril in which he would be left. She did not dare to quit him, helpless as he was, for again the sea was advancing with fearful rapidity upon his position; and indeed, to return to him, she would have to make somewhat of a plunge for it. Through the surge she went, however, without further thought.

'We must get up here; there is nothing else to be done,' she urged.

Then a few yards more of vain painful dragging and crawling, and the limit of the beach was reached. The sticky, spongy, crumbling cliffs, with great boulders of fallen earth at the base, rose before them, but soon

became sheer and wall-like, though soft and irregular in places, with tufts of sedgy grass and thistles here and there jutting out from the top of diminutive shelves and landslips. The line of high water was marked plainly by the dangling fringe of bladder-wrack or seaweed, which clung to all the harder and more stationary pieces of the earth.

‘We can never manage to clamber above that,’ he said, pointing to it—‘at least *I* can’t; for every movement of this leg gives me such agony that I am fit to faint. But do you scramble up, Jessie; you will manage to get foothold, though it will be touch and go. There would be no danger but for my helplessness. There now, let go of me and try! See, that bunch of seaweed to the right there! hold on to *that*! Now then, steady—so!’

She obeyed him with admirable coolness, and contrived just to reach high-water mark. But, turning to look down towards him, she said,

‘But I’m going no further, though, without you. You don’t suppose I’m going to leave you there. The tide will be over your head in less than half an hour.’

He was partly leaning, partly seated, on one of the largest masses of fallen earth, and she was down within arm’s length of him, and holding out her hand again as she spoke.

‘Come,’ she went on; ‘it will be an awful struggle, a terrible risk; but we may do it, and we must try. You must not mind the pain of your foot; you must use your knee instead.’

She but spoke the truth when she described the struggle and the risk as awful. Inch by inch, like crawling flies clinging to a slippery wall, they scaled the rougher and lower ridges of the cliff; and he at length, as well as she, held on to some of the tougher bunches of seaweed on the water-line.

'I can get no higher,' at length he said despairingly. 'You might, Jessie dear; your light weight, unencumbered by mine, will enable you to get beyond the danger of being washed away. Where can the men all be that none of them have been sent to seek me? They saw the way I took, and they could come by the top of the cliffs.'

Once more such efforts as the now fast-failing strength of both would allow were made to gain foot- or hand-hold on a higher level. Wave after wave was sweeping up to within a foot or two of them; but the full force of the surf was so broken by the groynes, that there was no more than a heavy ground-swell in that little bay, though the skirts of one of the tremendous tides or races were swirling along beneath them like a whirlpool.

She, still acting as pioneer, by dint of great exertion and care, was in the act of helping him on to a very narrow ledge, which, well above the reach of all but the spray, they had decided to make for, when the earth and grass tufts to which her left hand was clinging began perceptibly to give. He had barely gained the spot, with his bruised and torturing limb, and was endeavouring to stretch it clear of his other leg, when

he uttered a low cry of agony, his face suddenly blanched, his eyes glazed, and his head fell motionless on her shoulder.

The extra and sudden weight thus thrown upon her was more than her precarious hold would bear. She had just time to put him in a place of safety, by pushing his shoulders far over upon a sloping piece of grass, and of which she was barely within reach, when the earth gave way beneath her; and she slid like a stone down the face of the cliff, and like a stone disappeared in the broken tearing water below.

CHAPTER II. SECOND EPOCH.

‘HALLO! Sergeant-major, see! yonder’s the lieutenant—there, right away down the cliff! see, on the sheer of it there! Bedad, like a dead bird! How did he get there? and howiver will we get at him? Ho, by the mother of Moses, but this is an awful day! *Why*, he is dead, surely!’

These sentences and their accompanying shouts from the lips of a wild Irish gunner, who had been foremost of the party told off to go in search of the missing officer, soon brought the rest of the men to the cliff-edge, and within sight of the object of their search.

Then, amidst expressions of wonder and regret, discipline immediately asserted itself; and, under the orders of the sergeant-major, prompt measures were taken for the recovery of what all thought to be the dead body of their officer. Lying quite still and motion-

less, some twenty feet below them, clearly the only means of getting at him would be by the aid of a rope-ladder. So, despatching some of the men to carry the news to the temporary encampment, and to bring back the necessary tackle, easily supplied by the gear of the guns, &c., the remainder of the party stayed anxiously on the watch.

Presently the unfortunate man showed signs of returning consciousness, to the intense relief of his comrades, who were now, however, devoured by a terror lest by moving he should slip off the perilous ledge. Each show of increasing consciousness was followed by cautious calls and warning gestures, until by great good luck the poor fellow seemed to have understood the necessity of remaining quiet, as at length he waved his hand in acquiescence.

It was an anxious time; but relief came at last. A ladder was improvised; a light but muscular young gunner descended, who, making fast an extra rope round the shoulders of the lieutenant, was enabled with the assistance of those above, by degrees to hoist the still half-unconscious officer in safety to the grassy summit. Here every preparation had been made for him by the surgeon, who, with the major in command, was now on the spot. But no sooner had the crippled man briefly alluded to his accident, and the circumstances that led to it, than he began, in an excited but still half-dreamy state, to ask what had become of his companion.

‘Did none of you men see the lady?’ he asked.

‘He struggled with me up the cliff—indeed, but for

her, I could not have moved. She all but lifted me to where you found me; but I had no sooner got there than the agony of my leg, I suppose, made me faint, and I can remember nothing but a vague sort of vision, in which she seemed to glide away from me. Good God!' he added, half raising himself from the litter on which he had been placed, 'she must have slipped down into deep water and been drowned! For Heaven's sake, look about you! Are you sure nothing has been seen of her? Speak, men alive!'

But beyond two or three of the men testifying, as they stood rigidly at attention, to having seen their officer walking with a lady on the sands in the direction of the groynes, where the two had been lost sight of, nobody had so much as caught a glimpse of the unhappy girl.

News of the catastrophe spread immediately, and no persuasion could induce the injured man to allow himself to be removed from the spot whilst the search for the hapless girl was going on. With great reluctance did he allow his ankle to be examined; and he made it a personal favour with the surgeon and his commanding officer that he might be left behind whilst the troops returned to quarters. It was hoped that the injury was not serious; but the ankle and leg were so swollen and inflamed when the boot was cut off, that no definite opinion could at first be given. So the young lieutenant's request was granted, and, with the surgeon and the two attendants, he remained in his litter out there, under the still wild and clouded heavens, for

many hours. No news came of his lost companion : all feared that she must indeed have been carried far out to sea and drowned. Those who knew the coast and the tides best knew that this too certainly would be the fate of any one falling as she had been supposed to fall ; and, in a frame of mind which needs no describing, the young officer was conveyed by nightfall to his quarters.

News of the grievous disaster of course soon reached the sick and now lonely lady left in the lodging-house by the sea. It was more than her already shattered health could bear. The nature of her disease had led the physicians to foretell a sudden end in the event of any great shock ; and now that it had come she did not survive it half an hour.

Here the link necessary to hold my story together must be supplied.

Jessie Darrant was an orphan and an heiress, who, on the death of her father, a wealthy West Indian planter, had been sent to England to be placed under the charge of his unmarried and only sister. This lady had received her niece, then about fifteen years of age, with fervent gratitude. The two had clung the more to each other from their loneliness in the world, and Jessie's tender heart went out the more readily to her aunt when she found on how slender a thread her life hung. But, whatever the extent of the affection between aunt and niece, it could not prevent the springing up of other feelings in the breast of the latter. Old Miss Darrant resided in Canterbury, and moving as she did in her quiet way amongst the best society of the place,

naturally came in contact with much of its military element. Not very wonderful, therefore, was it that her niece, who as she grew up gave promise of great beauty, should attract much attention, and that one of the many young officers who humbled themselves at her feet should be regarded with more favour than the rest. He was the son of a very old friend of Miss Darrant's, and at the time Jessie arrived he had just obtained his commission in the artillery, and was quartered at Canterbury, prior to his going to Bermuda. He just made the acquaintance of the child, as she then was, and much talk and fun was elicited from the fact of his being on the point of going to the place whence she had just come. An impression, it may be assumed, had been made on both sides, even then; at any rate, a sufficient feeling had sprung up to invest his return, which took place in the course of five years, with considerable interest in her mind. He came and, paying a visit to Canterbury, found his little child-friend grown into a superb woman. He fell, as was to be expected; she had treasured his memory, and an engagement, recognised gladly by his friends at least, was the result. They would have been married probably within six months of his return, but for the rapid decline in old Miss Darrant's health.

Jessie had become absolutely necessary to her comfort; the poor old lady, in her failing health, clung to the girl more than ever, and it was agreed that, as her life, in the ordinary course of things, could not be much prolonged, there would be no great hardship in

the young couple postponing their happiness until it could be achieved without inflicting pain and sorrow on the last hours of old Miss Darrant. They felt that an immediate marriage would be the height of selfishness; both shrank from the thought of it when the fervour of their love allowed them for one moment to see what it would entail. So the engagement ran on far longer than had been expected. The life of Miss Darrant, after two years, seemed no nearer its end than before; but Allan and Jessie were young enough, as everybody said, to make waiting rather beneficial perhaps than otherwise.

Now, it came to pass that just before the doctors sent Miss Darrant to try the sea air at the new watering-place, Allan's battery was again quartered at Canterbury; and probably it was his constant presence on the spot which gave Jessie a better opportunity of judging how he bore the delay than she had hitherto had, and which led to that fatal walk and talk upon the sands.

The sensation created by the heartrending fate of Jessie Darrant throughout society, high and low, did not readily subside; but in the course of years the event naturally passed into comparative oblivion. It became a legend and tradition of Culverness, investing that primitive spot with an interest not its own; but it need hardly be said that time quite failed to dull Allan Hardwicke's memory of that day. Frank, generous, noble-minded fellow that he in reality was, how could he but feel that her life had been sacrificed for him?

How could he fail to reproach himself for that fickle selfish side of his character, which had led him to think he was tiring of the devotion of such a love as Jessie's? From the hour that his senses returned to him, and he realised how she, by superhuman strength, had helped him on to that little ledge, which she must have known by instinct could only support one of them, and that that one she had, on the spur of the moment, determined should be he rather than herself—how, in a word, she had, of set intention, given her own life for his—from that hour the full force of his old love for her returned, never again, he knew, to leave him while he lived.

Henceforth he was an altered man, and the suffering which his badly fractured limb entailed for many months in no way paralleled the mental agony which lasted him through years. By this time he was again fit for duty; his battery was under orders for the Cape; and he gladly hailed the distraction from his own bitter thoughts which he hoped he might find in active service. Of this the Caffre war afforded him plenty, but his hope was not realised; court danger as he might, he passed unscathed. The Fates seemed satisfied with his self-inflicted never-healing heart-wound, and they dealt him no other.

Sixteen years of chance and change brought him again face to face with the old locality, and found him as the captain commanding the troop of artillery stationed at Canterbury.

Now that his duties had brought him so near it,

there was nothing morbid in Captain Hardwicke's desire to look once more upon the spot—upon the memorable trysting-place where the current of his whole life had received the main direction of its flow.

He rode over alone to Culverness one afternoon late in the autumn ; and though, as we look at him, we see that his slight wiry figure is but little changed, his face bears full evidence of all that he has lived through. Iron-gray, tanned and furrowed, he looks a good ten years older than he is, whilst a certain sternness and gravity, consequent perhaps upon the habit of command, has settled on his face, to which it was a stranger in former days.

The watering-place had not been a great success, and although numbering now amongst its attractions many terraces of lodging-houses and a long pier, looked yet in an embryo condition. Only a remnant of the season's visitors lingered, and, with the exception of here and there a nursery-maid with some children dawdling listlessly about, the place was as forlorn and solitary as ever.

Arriving by the top of the cliffs to within a short distance of the ruined abbey, Captain Hardwicke soon saw that all remains of the actual cliff and bay, so memorable to him, had long ago been swallowed up by the greedy sea ; but the character of the place was unchanged, and he pushed his horse some way down a slithering landslip whence he could easily gaze upon the shore.

There he sat—he could not tell you for how long—

pondering on the one never-to-be-forgotten theme, and realising, even perhaps more vividly than he had ever done since, all the sad details connected with it. The stillness of the autumn day suited his mood, and, if inwardly conscious of the harmonising tones of the robin's note, the gentle sluicing of the tide upon the shore, and the merry calls now and then of some children at play amongst the straggling weather-stunted bushes near him, he marked them not, until aroused from his reverie by a young voice close by.

'If you please, will you tell me the time, sir?' it said.

A little boy and girl, evidently of the visitor class, had strayed up to him, and the former was the spokesman.

In his preoccupation, Captain Hardwicke hardly understood the question until it was repeated. Then he looked at his watch, telling the child that it was nearly five o'clock.

'O, it's tea-time!' he cried. 'Jessie, Jessie, come along ; we shall be late;' and the two scampered away up the hill.

'Jessie!' In *this* place of all others, with all its associations, to have heard *this* name uttered! Involuntarily Allan Hardwicke turned in his saddle to look after the children, whilst a keen pang went through his heart.

They disappeared over the upper ridge of the slope, and the rider, as if stung by an access of melancholy which he desired to shake off, dug his heels into his

horse's flanks and rode off at a breakneck pace across the rough ground towards the town. Nor did he slacken speed as he regained the cliff-path whence he had diverged, but, breaking in upon it behind a row of more straggling bushes that skirted it, came suddenly upon the two children and a lady, who at that moment were passing the spot.

Drawing rein to avoid riding over them, he apologised, and was about to continue his way—had, indeed, continued it for a yard or two—when he brought his horse to a dead standstill. His eyes and the lady's had met, and in that moment something that might be likened to an electric spark had flashed between them. She too had stopped, and they were now again face to face, with the strangest expression of bewilderment on each.

'I beg your pardon,' he faltered, 'but you really rem—I *cannot* be mistaken! yet it's impossible that—'

She had not moved, and seemed incapable of movement. He dismounted, and took a step towards her; still she did not move, and had turned deadly pale. There was a pause.

'Yes!' at length she said, holding out her hand, as if in answer to his mute interrogation. 'Yes, it is I; little as we could have looked for this—you least of all!'

But with the first sound of her voice he had seized her hand, and it would be hard to record the speech of either for many a minute after that.

'Why, it's the most wonderful thing, surely, that

ever happened,' he cried by and by; 'it's like a resurrection! What on earth does it mean? how has it come about? Tell me, why have you kept me—kept us—all these miserable years in the belief that you were dead? The suffering! O, the cruel suffering I have endured!'

'Ah! it was scarcely my fault,' she murmured; 'it's a long sad story—for you can hardly think that I have not suffered too!'

And truly her face, though plainly that of Jessie Darrant, bore traces of more than the mere passage of sixteen years would have left. He kept his gaze so fixed on her, and seemed so absorbed in the strangeness of the situation, that, though he put question after question, he had no patience to wait for her replies.

'To think,' he continued, 'that I should have ridden over here, after all this time, with no other thought in my mind than the loss of you, and then to meet you *here*! How is it that you are *here*, of all places?'

Still, not waiting for her to speak, he went on:

'And these children? the girl is called Jessie—don't tell me that she is named after you, and is your—'

The light and joy which had spread over his face suddenly vanished, and the grave stern expression was there again, as he this time waited anxiously on her words.

'No, she is not my child,' was the answer, 'though she is named after me; she is only my dear little friend.' (The two children were clinging round her

skirts affectionately.) 'No, Allan! I am still Jessie Darrant!'

But she did not remain Jessie Darrant long. In less than three months from the day she had thus been so miraculously restored to him, she became the wife of her old lover.

And her story? Well, that came out by slow degrees, for the intensity of the feelings which it called up broke the narrative into a thousand disjointed explanations and repetitions. I must piece it together, however, and let her give its outline as near as may be, when, the day after their meeting, the two strolled together along those cliff-tops, and sitting here and there upon grassy knolls and banks, in the pleasant autumn weather, they poured into each other's eager ears the myriad details of their separated lives.

'Hereabouts it must have been,' they said, as they stood looking down upon the shore somewhere very near the memorable tryst. 'And there we came along, and there tried to round the groyne. See! those black-green posts among the surf must be some of the piles still left. Yes,' she went on, 'it was a cliff very like that yonder, but steeper; and when I saw and realised the danger we were in, I forgot for a while the heavy sorrow at my heart—I thought of nothing but of helping you at any cost. My one chance was to reach that little ridge, and when I found that it could not support us both—well, you can divine the resolution I took. What was life to be henceforth for me? You no longer loved me; you had said so but just before (don't think I re-

proach you, Allan—you understand). I had barely time to help you to that resting-place, the treacherous earth was giving way beneath me, and the whole force of my despair rushed back upon me—I let go my handhold, and But the human instinct of self-preservation overruled my wish to die. Involuntarily I came to the surface, and my skill in swimming asserted itself. My light summer dress let me float readily, and I was swept by the rapid current in no time far from land. My memory of all this now is very dim. I think I recollect seeing a large vessel not far off, as I rose and fell on the ridge and furrow of the waves; but nothing is clear to me until I found myself in the cabin of a ship, with two persons standing by my berth. But this, as it proved, was not until ten days after I had been picked up, and we were then in the Bay of Biscay. A fair wind had been blowing, and the captain would not miss it by touching at a Channel port to put me ashore.

‘ Well, these two good people were the doctor and his wife, of whom I spoke to you last night; they were the only passengers the ship carried. It seems they took the greatest care of me from the very first, when I was taken on board for dead; but the doctor never despaired. They watched me unceasingly; they had no clue as to who I was, for I had no letters about me to tell. They only found the money—over 200*l.*—which you had returned that morning, you remember. The ship was a merchantman bound for Sydney. It was too stormy to stop at Madeira, as they had in-

around I found afterwards: and when we neared St. Helena I was still lying between life and death—they dared not move me. In those kind people determined to take me on with them to their own home in Sydney. I remember as well my first day walking to a sort of convalescence in which I was, and trying to string together the confused images and sensations that had floated unbroken about me for so long. I felt so desolate, so despairing, so utterly without hope, till I looked under the kind motherly face that stooped down to kiss me, and it told me that in two or three days we should be at home.

“Home?” I said: “I have none!”

“Yes, with us, my dear,” she answered; “do not let us sleep again, and try to get well.”

And by her side stood a grave white-haired man, who held my hand and put a glass to my lips, and who was looking at me with a smile.

I did not know what I was next, although I felt weak, I knew that I was getting well. They wrapped me up and took me on deck. The lovely clear soft air and the sea seemed so beautiful to me, I could only look and breathe. My kindly friends provided me with all I wanted, and told me about themselves; that they had just left their friends in Europe, and were returning to their Australian home. They had one daughter, they told me, about my own age, who would be so glad to have me as her companion. Then you know, Allan, my journey came to an end: we landed, and I was made welcome and so happy with my good friends! But

my heart was sore and ached for tidings from England. We had not been settled in Sydney more than a week before the next English mail arrived, and in the first newspaper that fell into my hands I read the announcement of my poor aunt's death. When I saw *that*, my mind was made up; I would never go back, I said. With her had snapped the last tie that bound me to the old home; why should I ever return? Let me be dead to all that knew me in England. I wrote to my aunt's lawyer (my trustee), who managed all our affairs, and entreated him to keep my secret, which he has done faithfully. My remittances came regularly to me; I grew fonder and fonder of my good friends year by year. I had confided all to them from the first, and they had thoroughly sympathised with me. I tried to still and hush every old longing, and at last felt contented and happy.

'After I had been a few years in the colony my girlfriend married an Englishman, and left us to settle with her husband in London. Then, a year ago, she came alone to pay us a visit at Sydney; but as the time for her return to her husband and children approached, the good old doctor and his wife could not bear the thought of another separation. He sold his property in the colony, and it was finally decided that we should all come back to the old country. I dared not part from such friends to be left solitary in Sydney, and so I conquered my dread of returning, and even at last welcomed the idea, for it brought with it a strange longing to look on the old scenes once more. Your me-

mory was still dear to me, and by degrees there grew up a fascination in the thought of being able again to stand upon the spot where our lives had been put asunder; though, had we not met so strangely as we have, Allan, I doubt if they could ever have come together again. We reached London some six weeks ago. My friend's children knew all about me, and attached themselves readily to me. Her youngest, the little girl named after me, was ill; sea air was recommended. I volunteered to take charge of her, and brought her with her young brother here, because I longed to come—because I Why need I tell you more?"

Why, indeed! All that was strange, romantic, and adventurous in Jessie Darrant's life ends here.

Its close promises to be uneventful enough—'quite fittingly!' as she often says, for she has had her share and more of trial, peril, and change.

SUMMER IN THE SUBURBS.

SUBURBS, forsooth ! Where are they gone ? And where, after a little time, shall we have to look for them ? There has ever been an outcry against the inroads of bricks and mortar upon our surrounding commons and pasturages.

Twenty years ago these encroachments were supposed to have reached their climax ; but, in truth, it was then merely the advance of skirmishers, the detached and semi-detached rank and file of this brick be-stuccoed lathe-and-plaster army ; and as is natural in such military formations there were left consequently plenty of open spaces, at more or less regular intervals, agreeable little remnants of the country, with here and there a tree, and patch of grass, and broken bank, that smelt fresh after rain, and in a way kept up the illusion that we were out of town.

Since then, however, the main body has come up in close column ; covered by its sharp-shooters or light infantry, it has established itself firmly on the enemy's verdant territory, and every interval of available ground has been occupied, utilised, and enclosed, to the entire transformation of the sometime suburb into London, and to the utter destruction of all semblance of rurality.

Meanwhile the commanders-in-chief of the architects and railway companies, like skilful generals, follow up their victories by still pushing forward their front in the skirmishing order with which they made their first advance.

Thus it would seem that in the course of another decade, where we now have to travel ten or twelve miles for a breath of fresh air, or a stretch on a breezy hill, we shall then have to go thirty.

Well, if people are born, they must have somewhere to live; and instead of grumbling and launching into truisms about the increase of population and the stupendous dimensions to which London is attaining, we had better make the most of what is still left to us; and as we cannot leave town for our annual holiday just yet, it is not unpleasant, whilst the days are at their longest and the London streets at their nastiest, to ramble mentally, if not bodily, through some of the green lanes, and over the open heaths, that are as yet comparatively within easy reach, and only partially subjugated by this inexorable metropolitan mammoth, this huge locust of civilisation, which is so rapidly devouring every patch of greensward and leafy retreat; this sooty caterpillar, which comes like a blight upon the picturesque, and reduces rusticity to a mere skeleton of its former self.

Smoke-begrimed and street-weary, compelled by our fate to live in the very centre of bustle and activity, there are fortunately a few spots remaining where we may blow off the cobwebs and free ourselves for a while

from the musty purlieus of the law. Yes, there are some retreats still attainable, and which, with good luck, may possibly last our time, where the country still holds out manfully against the invading legion, and disputes every group of trees and foot of turf. We can yet smell the gorse and heather on Wimbledon Common, and by shutting our eyes for a while induce a dreamy sort of belief that we are north of the Tweed. There is always a sort of Scotch smell there; and in very truth there is many a worse place to moon away a summer afternoon upon than this breezy heath.

Giving the reins therefore to our easy-going hack, 'imagination,' and summoning our trusty squire, 'good memory,' to our side, let us stroll across the springy peaty earth to the windmill. We will not bother ourselves with 'very long ago;' we will leave behind the time when this broad plain was made 'a happy hunting-ground' by Jerry Abershaw and the rest of the highway scoundrelism of the last century, and when that astute criminal swung in chains, as tradition has it, above the post still to be found on this scene of his predatory career, and when gibbets were common sights at all its cross-roads. No; we will only go back some thirty years, and picture a group of soldier-like gentlemen assembling in yonder hollow on a gray September morning. Let us fancy we see the ground measured out, and two of the company taking up positions opposite one another, each pointing ominously with something at his opponent's head; that we hear two sharp reports, then two more, and then see that one of the

figures is helped by the rest, limping and maimed, to the carriage hard by, upon the road up there. Let us speculate a little as to the amount of satisfaction derived by the party from this proceeding, and then let us wonder if the worthy miller watched this last of the duellos fought under his eye—as millers always watch, coolly, with folded arms—from the breast-high door of his mill; and then—yes, and then let us emphatically congratulate ourselves that the only reports of firearms we now may hear from this selfsame spot come from the peaceful practice of the Volunteer, as he blazes away at yonder butts, with their targets looming like distorted ghosts through the summer haze.

Duels in the hollow by the Wimbledon windmill were not uncommon events at the time when Captain Marryat was writing his delightful books in his maternal mansion on the skirts of the then rural village. Their continual recurrence, indeed, may even have suggested the celebrated triangular one in which that eminent, but argumentative, young mariner, Mr. Midshipman Easy, took so prominent a part.

In fact, the great nautical author, if he had been an early riser, which he was not, might have heard the echoes across the common of those identical shots, one of which wounded Captain Tuckett; which result, causing the arraignment of my Lord Cardigan before his fellow-peers, helped to give the *coup de grâce* to the ridiculous custom of trying to blow a man's brains out if he failed to have all his wine decanted at mess.

Unluckily, with the custom passed away too the

genial hearty writer, and the fashion for reading his wholesome laughter-stirring work. The broad expanse of well-wooded park, on which his eye may have continually rested as he looked up from his writing, skirt-ing the common as far as Putney Heath, has well-nigh gone too. Cut down and cut up, lotted and parcelled out, a vast company of the ruthless skirmishers have long since occupied the place, and, under cover of the high-sounding title of 'Park Side,' have reduced the old moss and ivy-clad wall, and intrenched themselves behind all the hideous varieties of the modern railing and paling, gate-posts and entrances, with which eligible villa-residences are usually begirt.

Near the thousand yards' range of the National Rifle Association the grassy undulations of the Roman camp are still visible—such remains are never very easily levelled; and from them we can yet catch a glimpse across the open country in the extreme distance, if we know where to look, of the grand-stand at Epsom; but, turning thence towards Combe Wood, we miss an object conspicuous in our early days at that point, an object fraught with mystery and interest, the very name of which, as much as the machine itself, has passed into equal desuetude—the semaphore—which communicated from Portsmouth with the Admiralty.

The 'brisk' lightning has long ago superseded that clumsy telegraph, which used to signal continuously from point to point along the high lands from Whitehall to Spithead.

Many and curious doubtless must have been the

messages thus transmitted ; and from the house hard by the adjacent semaphore station on Putney Heath, William Pitt may have watched with lack-lustre eye, from his death-bed, the gyrations of this primitive machine. We, too, can perfectly recall the look of it at this point, as—now for a time forgetting the many changes that have chanced since then, as well as the much-altered aspect of the place—memory, stimulated by the fresh healthy air (as yet, thank Heaven ! quite unaltered), brings back to our fancy the gaunt contrivance hard at work, its ghostly arms stretching slowly and mysteriously forth, like a sign-post run mad, or a dilapidated windmill making futile efforts to get right of its own accord.

Yes, it is pleasanter up here than in Holborn or Cheapside this long summer evening, although the amiable lord of the manor has cut down the trees at the top of Putney Hill, and all but turned that descent to the river into a continuation of the Putney High-street ; and it is pleasant too, floating through the arches of the old bridge, quietly away up to Hammer-smith, Kew, and Richmond, although the water-company's aqueduct has marred the aspect of affairs since the time when Theodore Hook held 'high jinks' in his river-side villa just under the shadow of Fulham Church.

Kew Gardens, Bushey Park, or Hampton Court are not bad make-shifts for the country ; and although a bidding to join the festive board at the palatial Star and Garter at Richmond may not be to the cockney mind an unfitting conclusion to a summer's day in the

suburbs, it is nevertheless quite possible to get on with some bread-and-cheese and beer at a wayside public on Kingston Hill, and perhaps not the less enjoyable will be our temporary ruralising, if we sometimes rough it at such an humble hostelry.

Talking of hostelries in connection with the suburbs, discursive and erratic as is our mood, recollections arise of numberless pleasant little dinners, unpretentious luncheons, water-parties, picnics, race-meetings, and croquet-matches associated with our urban existence, and happening more or less within the twelve-mile radius from Charing Cross, bringing with them, in a kaleidoscopic sort of jumble, a whole array of familiar signboards.

Yonder, at this moment, we can see one swinging over a pretty, leafy, bowery little corner, dedicated, through some mysterious incongruity, to the natives of Spain, and down the perspective of the long road, in the distance towers up the château appertaining to the man of straw whose Christian name was John; and thus by the simplest transition, and without the aid of any magic carpet or flying horse, we find ourselves on Hampstead Heath.

Yes; and Hampstead Heath, despite its donkeys and crowds of holiday-makers, can be turned to good account, if fresh air and escape from bustle and turmoil be the objects in view.

Described, written about, and painted in a thousand ways, nothing very new or startling can be expected from it; but the very familiarity of the place to a

healthily philosophic mind should constitute one of its charms; and if we can divest ourselves of the idea that because it is common it must necessarily be uninteresting, we may make it available in midsummer for a shady retreat by no means contemptible.

There are few cities surrounded by such beautiful country as this mighty London; and not the least picturesque of its points are the sister hills of Hampstead and Highgate. If the Londoner had to travel over the sea to look at them, they would be quoted and made much of by those the least liable to be affected by Nature's handiwork. Even as it is, we know how the boisterous, unthinking, and appearance-disregarding multitude enjoys itself on Hampstead Heath; and the white umbrella of the landscape-painter, springing up, as it continually does, in all directions over its broken gravel-pits, and from the skirts of its innumerable picturesque little copses, is proof sufficient of the estimation in which it is held by the artists. It is a very mine of wealth to them; and one of their most brilliant ornaments, but recently passed away in the fulness of his fame—crowned, as Dibdin might have aptly sung of this sailor-painter, by 'unfading laurels, watered by a nation's tears'—made many a pilgrimage here, where it was by no means an unusual sight to see Clarkson Stanfield in his later years working away at some little reedy pool and crumbling bank with all the diligence, love, and devotion of a tyro in the art.

With all his great experience of foreign lands and of the finest subjects in the world, he would not disdain

to throw his whole power into the study of the simplest objects to be found upon this cockney playground ; and the unpretentious title, 'On Hampstead Heath,' must mark many and many of the gems which, by the time these words are printed, will have been distributed through the art-buying community by the hands of the auctioneer.

The attractions of this spot induced him to select its neighbourhood for his home. He knew its advantages as an outdoor studio, and knew also the necessity of such a school for a profession which is never learned. 'As the father, so the son is.' Staunch in his adherence to the old ground, we find periodically cropping up—amidst pictures of foreign cities, Rhine castles, Moselle bridges, Alpine passes, and Italian lakes—subjects drawn by the conscientious inheritor of the honoured name of Stanfield from the Hampstead district.*

Invaluable, likewise, must be this lung of London to that dexterous and skilful artist, Professor Pilleau ; for since sketching from Nature has now become an indispensable accomplishment for every well-educated 'jeune meess,' we can hardly imagine where else he could so conveniently take his coveys of art-loving beauties for their lessons out of doors. And if we come across him, as we may continually do on a summer's afternoon during the London season, in some retired nook on the heath, surrounded by the fair enthusiasts, literally sitting at his feet and elbows, we

* Since these words were penned the son, too, has passed away.—W. W. F.

may be inclined to envy him, and to look upon the profession of a drawing-master as by no means so contemptible or unpleasant an occupation as it is sometimes held to be.

However, master or pupil, teacher or taught, there is enough natural beauty for them all if they only know how to use their 'summer in the suburbs.' Why not trust ourselves, therefore, for a while to the guidance of 'Mike the Marler'? His skilful brush is always engaged at this time of year on London or some of its outlying districts. Although a landscape-painter, he swears by 'the big city,' and says it is the finest place to 'go to' in the world. The Thames Embankment, when finished, will spoil it a little; but while the works are going on they only add to its picturesqueness, as he has proved more than once upon the walls of some of our exhibitions.

Up the river, or down the river, by sunrise or sunset, amongst the water-lilies and willow-studded creeks above bridge, or amidst the tangled shipping in 'the Pool,' and down away, maybe, as far as the Erith Marshes, with the infinite variety of sail for ever looming up amongst them as the stream winds and twists its way seawards, we shall find him filling his portfolio better than many of his brethren who are for ever seeking 'fresh woods and pastures new.'

Heave ahead, then, Master Marler; and since your easel is portable, let your friends be so likewise. Transform your parachute of an umbrella into an aerial machine, and transport us 'Eastward Ho!' Pack up

your traps, and if the wind sits fair, steer straight away for Greenwich Park. You are fond of the distant view from its hill of St. Paul's and Westminster, with the Scotch firs and hospital-domes for a foreground; you love to trace the sparkling course of the Thames till it loses itself amongst the dockyards, forests of masts, and murky outskirts of the metropolis; and, in good sooth, you are right, for towards the evening of a summer's day you can scarce fail to see effects from this, one of the most picturesque of London's suburbs, that shall be hard to beat. Or stroll away during the noontide heat through the groves and avenues, and amongst the old chestnut-trees you shall find as much beauty of chequered shade and sparkling sheeny light as shall satisfy the greediest of your class.

Ay, and you do not object—small blame to you—to the consumption of little fish at the establishment of the renowned Quartermaine, when, on the first Monday of May, your esteemed friend Strontian, R.A., invites you to partake of the hospitality of the R. A. Club; especially do you enjoy the salmon and spitchcocked eels; mighty is your delight at the little hot red dumplings made of lobster, and all the rest of the wondrously-named and curiously-concocted piscine *cuisinerie* which is put before you; and even the flabby flounder *souchet* is divested to a great extent of its mud-like flavour if you have only discovered in the morning your picture hung on the line and embellished with the much-coveted star in the corner.

Then, indeed, how pleasant are the associations

connected with the name of Trafalgar! The heroes of the fight in the Hospital, the rooms for the pictures in the Square, and the whitebait on the table of the hotel, mingle at once in a delicious vision of glory, fame, and feasting !*

But lo, we are in the Park ! the opening-day of the Royal Academy has long passed, and maybe we are at work again for next year. The holiday-makers will not much interfere with us, so long as we avoid the Monday whole- and Saturday half-holidays ; they will chaff us a little, perhaps, but, in the main, they will be too much occupied this hot weather by the cooling pastimes of 'kiss-in-the-ring,' running down the hill, or donkey-racing on Blackheath.

We shall not be beguiled by the ' sirens' dispensing tea and shrimps ; we need not believe more than we please of the yarn that may be spun to us if we chance to address one of the old pensioners ; we need not believe that he is one of the identical 'pilgrims to St. Paul's,' or that Mr. Millais is the latest hero amongst the many who have been on terms of intimacy with the 'old salt;' we are not compelled to make ourselves ill by an over-indulgence in the 'sweetstuff' and oranges, nuts, ginger-beer, and lemonade often dispensed at odd corners of the Park by Nelson's veterans, who, although now independent, and no longer tenants of Sir Christopher Wren's noble pile, appear unable to tear themselves away—or, as they would phrase it, cast off their moorings—from the scene of

* Written in 1868.

their well-earned repose ; and since the fair has gone the way of all fairs, there will be little to dispel any sylvan illusions in which we may wish to indulge.

Distant laughter, rather boisterous, perhaps ; the echo of the teeth-on-edge-setting, back-scratching instrument known as ‘ all the fun of the fair,’ may still break occasionally upon your ear ; and should you have reached the respectable age of everybody else, it may recall the student days and nights when ‘ Richardson’s Show’ and ‘ Alger’s Booth,’ gingerbread-nuts, pig-headed ladies, piebald children, giants, dwarfs, travelling menageries, acrobats, and magicians, jostled each other in the Greenwich thoroughfares, and collected around them all the ribald blackguardism indigenous to such institutions of the ‘ good old times.’

In the simple and healthy enjoyment of fine weather, refreshing green, and the pursuits of a cultivated taste, you will soon forget, however, this phantasmagoria of dull things which you may have once called amusements, and feel amply compensated for the more portly figure and scantier locks which have now and then been sources of much keen regret. ‘ Summer in the suburbs’ we therefore maintain may yet be passed pleasantly enough ; and although Greenwich, like Hampstead, is, as we of course know, horribly plebeian, it can afford us very good breathing-ground.

Fortune will never come with both hands full. We cannot at the same time enjoy the advantages of town and country ; so instead of repining because Primrose Hill is not Ben Nevis, and the sea does not wash the

southern side of the Strand, let us stick up manfully for such rusticity as is within our reach, remembering always that much of our unhappiness in this world arises from a sort of an idea that we may compel each event and movement, every circumstance of our existence, to take shape according to our longings,—a vain sort of expectation that square pegs should fit into round holes; so begetting a childish, fretful discontent because they will not.

‘Let us take the goods the gods dispense;’ and they are very many. The machinery of Nature is always compensatory; and though possessing no Scotch moors, deer-parks, or cover-shooting of our own, there is no reason why we should not enjoy the fresh air and green trees of suburban London, and there gratify worthily every feeling we may have for the picturesque.

Look again, in confirmation of this, for instance, at the fine work which Michael Marler, despite the continuous invasion of bricks and mortar, can bring even from Streatham, Clapham, or Wandsworth Commons; from such places as Tooting, Norwood, or Dulwich; from Epping Forest, Edmonton, and Ware. We cannot go wrong in clinging to his skirts if we would know all the beauties of land and sky by which we cockneys are hemmed in. Follow him through the green lanes of Willesden, Edgeware, and Harrow, or by Hornsey to Muswell Hill and thereabouts, or fly away with him again towards the Thames, and settle down in Richmond Park.

He is the best cicerone we can have; he knows

'Each lane, and every alley green,
Dingle or bushy dell, of this wild wood,
And every bosky bourne from side to side.'

In midsummer there is nowhere brighter emerald twinkling in the grass or foliage, or more paintable and enjoyable sylvan solitudes to be found, than in this royal chase of suburban Surrey.

Look down yonder glade of oak-trees, with the dappled herd browsing undisturbed amongst the great gnarled trunks; or see again, through that vista of bowing elms, the distant silver thread of Thames at Kingston, the square church-tower rising from among the trees and blue haze, which, slightly overhanging the town, gently merges the farthest hills into the summer sky; and look, as you have eyes to love and reverence, at that brake of fern and underwood here at your feet, and be very happy that you claim for friend the painter who brings you to see these things.

Smoke a pipe with him, if you have a mind that way, and rejoice in the fragrant fumes of Maryland, as they mingle with the sweet odours of the active vegetation all around; they will help you to conjure up many a vision of forest life. 'An you like it,' they will help you to people this verdant palace with Jaques and his companions railing against the outer world; they will compel the trees to speak to you in their own tongue of everything the banished nobles said about such scenes.

To all appearance you are as much shut out from London as if you were in Ardennes itself; only shall

you be aware of its proximity, and such advantages as thereunto attach, when, through the blue wreaths of the curling smoke, you see Rosalind and Celia resting against the far-spreading and antique roots of yonder forest-king, with Touchstone keeping watch, and sagely moralising, perchance, on the flight of time.

Then, and then only, perhaps, you will for an instant think of Trafalgar-square ; and although glad that you are not just now hustling and fighting your way through the hot and dusty rooms of the Royal Academy, you will not be sorry to think they are within reach, and that the remembrance of their contents aids you in your pleasant day-dreaming on the wooded banks of Father Thames.

And if we should wish yet further to extend our illusions, and summon before us phantoms from merry Sherwood, why, Maid Marian, Little John, Friar Tuck, and the whole outlawed motley greenwood crew will start into existence if we but bend our steps across our pleasant Richmond Park, and shape our homeward course through the gate which bears the name, by some mysterious association, of bold Robin Hood.

RALPH DAYNER'S DOOM.

If travellers see strange things, so do artists, at least landscape-painters do, for they are travellers as well; and in pursuit of their vocation visit so many remote places, and come in contact with so many different sorts of people, that they ought to be good story-tellers. The rural and seafaring populations, with whom of necessity they have to mingle, offer many curious studies of character; and the sketcher from Nature, who chances to be a writer also, may pick up amongst them incidents and stories by the score. I have come across many, but the brush has claimed so much of my time, that, like most of my craft, I have had but little inclination to give any to the pen.

However, within the last week some circumstances have occurred under my very eyes of so tragic a nature, and associated with so terrible a story, that I am tempted, before I leave the spot, to utilise the long evenings now setting in by writing down the facts as they have come to my knowledge.

I am staying at a little public-house called the Pilot, the only hostelry in the small village of Pits-dean, situated at the foot of that enormous range of chalk cliffs which, at its highest point, is marked on

the charts of the south coast as Shingle Head. The scant population is composed of a few fishermen, farm-labourers, and some lime-burners; these latter being the most numerous, for lime-burning is carried on extensively in the district, and where the chalk begins to rise from the flatter country by the beach the kilns abound. Odd gaps and roads wind down to them through the upheaved soil and fantastic masses of landslide, rendered more fantastic by the cuttings, excavations, and blastings constantly going on. Little green plateaus jut out here and there halfway down some of the taller cliffs; and notably there is one which, overhanging a kiln on one side, and cut off on the other by a rising precipice of chalk, is accessible only by a narrow winding path descending from the upper heights.

This, together with the range of white cliffs, very varied in form, and rising in some places to hundreds of feet; the burning lime-kiln with its film of smoke, its dark cavernous furnace, its adjacent stack of dried gorse for fuel; the carts and horses going to and fro down the steep road to the beach, and across the sands to the little craft that has put in at flood-tide, and is now at the ebb left stranded to receive her cargo of limestone; the moving figures, and some boats—made up a bit of coast scenery which tempted me to submit for a week or so to the limited accommodation offered by the Pilot. I had marked down the scene during a long walk, and had determined to take up my quarters at the rough inn for the purpose of painting it. So, six days ago I came over, bag and baggage, from Helmstone, the

watering-place where I was staying, and set to work betimes the next morning.

The autumnal weather was beautiful, and the effect just what I wanted ; but the little craft was absent, and as she formed a conspicuous item in the picture, I grew anxious for her appearance as the tide came in. When it was at its highest, however, she slowly rounded the headland, and dropped anchor in her old berth, a little before noon. I knew that by the time the men had had their dinner she would be lying high and dry, and taking in her cargo, in the usual picturesque fashion.

Resting for a while, I strolled down to the beach to get a closer look at her. She was rough and tub-like, as might be expected, remembering her trade ; cutter-rigged, and of from fifteen to twenty tons burden. There was a deck, and cabin hatchway forward, an open hold, and the yellow letters on her black stern announced that she was the Betsy of Helmstone, and that Ralph Dayner was her master. The sea was calm, but there was just enough ripple breaking on the shore to prevent the purport of some very high words issuing from the tiny cabin being heard. Nevertheless, I could make out enough to understand that there was a man abusing and bullying a woman. Once there was something very like a scream ; but soon all was silent, and presently a sailor emerged from the hatchway. Calling to a boy, apparently asleep in the hold, the two got into the little boat which the cutter had in tow, and pulled ashore. Then they hauled it up on to the beach, and I saw that the man was a huge, broad-shouldered, bull-

necked, ill-looking fellow. As he walked away towards the kilns, exchanging a few rough words with the men at work there, and disappeared up the road leading to the village, I thought I had never seen a worse specimen of his class.

Sitting down again to my easel, I became much absorbed; and as the dinner-hour left the spot quite deserted, I remained for a long time free from the interruption of any of those on-lookers who are always more or less attracted by the sight of an artist sketching. Practice has made me generally indifferent to these molestations; and so, when after a while I was conscious that some one was standing near me, I at first paid little heed to the fact. But when for a moment I chanced to turn my head, I was rather startled by the sullen and forbidding aspect of the individual at my elbow. He was a tall, thin, pale-faced man of about forty, with shaggy iron-gray beard, and matted hair.

Dressed in a besmirched and seedy suit of black, and wearing an old chimney-pot hat, he looked very different from any of my usual audience; but it was not so much this which disturbed me as his unpleasant stare—a stare bent upon me, be it remarked, and not upon my picture. I could see out of the corner of my eye that he was not regarding what I was doing at all. He had his back turned too much towards the easel for that, and each time that I glanced up at him, and our eyes met, I encountered a dark sinister scowl. I tried, however, to ignore his presence, although I confess it affected me disagreeably. By degrees, too, I

had a sensation that he was trying to get nearer to me without my knowing it, and I became sure of this at last, as I furtively watched his feet. They were certainly creeping as it were towards me, and, without taking a stride, he had got much closer to me than he was when I first noticed him. He was now not above a yard from where I sat, and so I looked up at him at last point-blank. He winced a little under my steady glance, dropped his wild eyes for a moment, and moved slowly round to the other side. Again I tried to go on with my work and forget him. In a more solitary place I should have felt rather uneasy; nay, was I not really feeling so now?—for here, at this hour, with the coast utterly deserted, I was as much alone as I well could be.

I did not know what to make of the fellow. Did he want to attack and rob me? He hardly looked like a pickpocket; but yet I could not doubt from his strange behaviour that he had some sinister intention.

Resolving thus much in my mind, and seeing that he was again creeping in his cat-like stealthy way towards me, and this time, as it seemed, trying to get behind me, I stood up suddenly, and facing him, said angrily, 'What do you mean by this dodging about? If you want to see what I am doing, look at it and be off, and don't annoy me any longer.'

I had pitched my easel in such a position as to make it impossible for anybody to get to my rear without passing very close in front of me first; for I was about halfway up the cliff-road, just at one of its zigzag

bends, with a steep slope down to the beach on the left hand, and on the right a sheer wall of rising chalk. Instead of answering me, the fellow burst into a low impertinent laugh, and, slipping between the easel and the edge of the cliff, was behind me in a moment. Turning almost as rapidly, however, I was again face to face with him; and now there was barely a foot's space between us. He appeared scarcely prepared for this movement, and again winced perceptibly under my steady gaze. His long bony fingers, which were remarkably claw-like in their action and form, twitched nervously at his beard, his laugh ceased, his eyes dropped, and he shrank back as if he thought I was going to strike him, much as a fierce dog that had met his master might have done. Before I had time to speak, he shyly and awkwardly, but with some politeness, raised his hat, saying, in a soft gentle voice, 'I beg your pardon, I thought I knew you; I am sorry to have disturbed you, and I wish you good-morning.' Then, again slipping by me, he walked away down the road to the beach, occasionally looking back furtively over his shoulder in my direction. He passed close to the cutter, finally disappearing round some jutting rocks, with his head bent towards the ground, apparently deeply absorbed, and noticing nothing around him.

Right glad was I to see his back, for I had never been so much put out in my life by the impertinence of an idler; and the strange conduct and appearance of this man set me wondering who he could be. But

the interest in my work once revived, he vanished for a time from my mind. Only when the short twilight drove me to my solitary chop in the parlour of the little inn did I think of him again, or make any inquiries.

No, the landlord din't know nothin' at all about such a customer; he hadn't never seen his like up that way; no, nor no more hadn't the one or two natives who were by this time dropping in for their evening smoke and glass. I have said that the Pilot's accommodation is limited; and beyond my snug clean little bedroom my privacy does not go. This is no hardship, however, for I have always been used to roughing it; and there is nothing objectionable to me in occasionally mingling with the homely frequenters of a village ale-house. Thus I smoked my pipe, and listened to, or chatted with, the few customers as they came in from time to time. Several of them had seen me at work during the day; but of course, as it was whilst they were absent that my strange visitor had appeared, and as they knew nothing of him otherwise, they could give no information.

At a table in the farthest corner of the room—which was fairly spacious, considering the size of the house—in company with two workmen from the lime-kilns, sat the ill-looking fellow whom I had seen come ashore from the cutter. As it was getting late I was surprised to see him there, and asked of a fisherman close beside me how it was this man had not gone off with his craft and her cargo before it got dark.

'O,' said the man, in an undertone, 'he bee's a

proper radical sort o' chap that Ralph Dayner; there's never no knowin' what he'll be up to! Somewhiles he'll go hisself right enough, and somewhiles he'll just leave it to his lad and his missus, and go off on the drink for a week or two at a time; and I reckon that's what he's up to now! I reckon the boy and one of our men 'ull take the Betsy round to Helmstone to-night better than he would hisself; and his missus won't be none the worse for it neither; proper radical he bee's to her too somewhiles sure-ly!

'Ill-uses her?' I suggested.

'Yes, I reckon he does,' went on the man; 'and she be a poor sad sort of creatur too, kind o' cracky they do say somewhiles. Harmless eno', you know, sir, but a little weak in her head like, and that makes it all the worse for her, don't you see?'

Of course I could see plainly enough, and of course I could now understand the sound I had heard from on board the cutter in the morning.

Our farther talk was here interrupted by the sound of wheels stopping at the door of the inn, followed by the hurried entrance of two strangers. One was a strong broad-shouldered man, in appearance rather like an upper groom out of livery; the other, also tall and strong, looked like a doctor. He said abruptly, 'Do any of you here happen to have seen wandering about over the downs and cliffs to-day a tall, thin, pale-faced man, with a beard, dressed in black, and wearing a high hat?'

I instantly replied that certainly I had seen a person

answering this description, and I briefly told the gentleman under what circumstances.

‘That’s he,’ he replied, ‘without doubt. Now, look here,’ he added, addressing the company generally, who were of course all attention, ‘he is a madman, and this morning he escaped from the asylum at Helmstone. Now, I offer five pounds reward to any one who shall be the means of helping us to secure him. Depend upon it he is not far off, but as it is dark, I am afraid we may not be able to find him till the morning. Still, if any of you who know the country well will guide me and my man, we will go and do what we can. He’ll be stowing himself away under some barn or hayrick, or down on the shore somewhere perhaps. Can you let us have a lantern or two, landlord?’

Naturally, the whole roomful was astir by this time. Every one volunteered his services, and a couple of lanterns being produced, and a move made towards the door, the doctor paused as he reached it, and said, ‘Now, steady; I must warn you of one thing, he is very dangerous—what we call a homicidal maniac—that is to say, he will try to murder, try to strangle, anybody he gets hold of who shows the slightest fear of him. He has already killed a man in his madness; that is why he has been shut up. But if you face him boldly, look straight into his eyes, and show that you are not afraid of him, you will have no more difficulty in dealing with him than you would with one of the sheep on these hills; but if he sees you shrink from him for an instant, he’ll have his fingers in your neck-

cloth before you know where you are, and slight as he is, he is as strong as a lion.'

I need not say what flashed through my mind at this moment, or how thankful I felt for the escape I had had. Among the six or eight eager listening faces turned towards the doctor whilst he spoke there was only one that grew pale; the tallest and biggest man in the room was the only one who showed the slightest sign of cowardice. This was Ralph Dayner, the owner of the cutter, who, at the conclusion of the doctor's words, drew back, unperceived by everybody but me, to the corner where he had been sitting, and, with something that was very like a shudder, sank moodily into his chair, and took a deep draught of the liquor in front of him. I was the last to leave the room as the little crowd went forth into the night; and I left him still sitting there.

Having, by the aid of a lantern, conducted the doctor to the spot where I had been sketching, and pointed out the way the man had taken when he left me, I returned to the inn, having no mind to assist farther in the exciting search. Dayner had not moved from his corner in the parlour when I peeped in, and I went to bed full of uncomfortable reflections upon the escape I had had from the clutch of those long bony fingers. Had not something urged me to assume an angry dominant tone towards the unfortunate madman as promptly as I did, there is no doubt he would have wreaked his homicidal propensities upon me. He would have crept to within a springing distance, and

then, like a wild beast, would have strangled me, or thrown me over the cliff. As it was, finding me prepared and resolute, he suddenly assumed the fawning tone and hypocritical manner which I have understood to be part of the cunning displayed by those afflicted with this direst of diseases.

With no small regret I learned next morning that the search proved fruitless, and that the lunatic was still at large. It was very much like hearing that a man-eating tiger was prowling about the neighbourhood, and I confess to having hesitated about going on with my work. Yet I could not well afford to lose a day, and as I had shown myself master of the situation once, I would rely on being able to do so again. Therefore, keeping a sharp look-out, it was not long ere I was ensconced in my old position, and fully engrossed with my sketch. As luck would have it, the spot was unusually quiet to-day. The kilns, though still burning, were not being fed; the Betsy did not come round from Helmstone; and with the exception now and then of two or three natives loafing about, on the watch, as they said, 'for that theer cracky chap, as nobody 'cept the gentleman a-draughin' had clapped eyes on,' I had the cliffs and the road all to myself, just at the very time when I could have cheerfully submitted to a little company.

Late in the afternoon the doctor and his man, both looking weary and travel-stained from their want of rest and long tramp, paid me a short visit. Their scouts, they said, had failed to find any trace of the

fugitive. Indeed I believe the doctor was inclined to doubt the statement I had made, for he cross-examined me again and again on the whole matter. An hour or more passed; the beach, as far as the eye could stretch, was quite deserted, as also were the tops of the cliffs, along which, from my position, I could see some way. The sun was declining, the thin film of blue smoke from the lime-kiln rose prettily across the little green plateau before mentioned, and the whole effect at this time was one of perfect calm and peace, but also one of intense loneliness. At last, however, this was rudely broken by the appearance of Ralph Dayner coming down the road. He was far from sober, and lurched and staggered in his gait. He stopped now and then, and appeared to be looking vacantly about seawards for his vessel. As he neared me he said sulkily,

‘D’ye ’appen t’ ha’ seen that theer boat o’ mine?’

‘Not since yesterday,’ I replied shortly.

‘Not since yesterday?’ he repeated moodily, first turning his bloodshot eyes upon me and then towards the spot where she had been lying. ‘What d’ye mean by yesterday? What’s yesterday? ’Twar’n’t yesterday I brought her round, was it? No, couldn’t ha’ been,’ he continued to mutter; ‘’twas s-mornin’. Where the blazes is she gone?’

And then he staggered a pace or two farther down the road, stopped, came back, scowled at me, muttered another oath, and retreated by the way he had come.

I had watched him reach the second bend in the road above me, when I saw him suddenly give a start—

much as if he had seen a ghost—and set off running with all his might. Wondering what could have produced such unlooked-for agility in a man of his bulk, I beheld, at about twenty yards from him, a tall dark figure emerging stealthily from out of one of the many cuttings or chalk-pits by the side of the road. I immediately recognised the madman. He was without his hat, and was stooping, or crouching, as it seemed at first, but as Dayner took to his heels, he presently set off running after him.

I stood up from my easel and shouted. I had a whistle with me, and blew it with all my might—did everything I could to raise an alarm. For a moment a turn in the road hid alike pursuer and pursued from view, but presently they both stood out clear against the evening sky, upon the top of the nearest high cliff. The pace at which the heavier man moved was extraordinary. Fear seemed to have lent him wings; nevertheless the other was steadily gaining on him; and for an instant it looked as if they might encounter at the cliff-edge, for they were running straight towards it. Whilst I trembled at the thought of what might then follow, for I could imagine that in his blind terror Dayner did not know in which direction he was running, he turned nimbly and doubled back like a hare; but again feeling himself overtaken, hearing, doubtless, the quick breathing of his pursuer almost in his ear (for the latter, with outstretched arm, seemed about to have him in his grip), the terrified fugitive took suddenly to the little winding path that led from the upper height

down to the green plateau overhanging the lime-kiln. The remnant of his wits fairly scared out of him, he probably hardly saw whither he was going, or he would have remembered that, as from here there was no escape, a struggle for life would surely ensue.

Reaching the grass, Dayner made for the ledge above the kiln, and this brought him to within fifty yards of where I was standing. I could see the terror in his white bloated face; and as his bewildered gaze fell upon the yawning red-hot pit of burning lime beneath him, and he knew that he was caged, he threw up his arms with a shriek, and turning round, encountered the maniac face to face. They closed in an instant; the fatal grip was already on Dayner's throat. Despite every effort, he failed to shake it off, or even to relax it in the least; but his enormous strength enabled him to lift his antagonist off the ground as if he had been a child.

As he did so, they fell, but Dayner downwards; and for several moments they were rolling in a huddled heap together, the thin sinewy form of the madman clinging to and entwining the other's bulky frame as a serpent might coil round an elephant. Dayner struggled to his feet again, and in the wild whirl which followed, I saw from the deepening colour of his face that those terrible fingers must be tightening their hold.

It was a fearful spectacle! Hither and thither for a few moments more, upon that narrow ledge of turf, the two bodies swayed, now going with a heavy thud against the wall of chalk on the one side, and then

staggering perilously near the sheer down cliff above the kiln on the other. Twice again they fell, and twice again Dayner got to his feet. He was now tearing at the madman's beard and hair, and dealing smashing blows with his huge fists at the face of his foe; but the grip evidently never for an instant lessened; it was steadily doing its fatal work.

All of a sudden the big man's strength seemed to fail him entirely. Once more the two dropped to the ground, this time so close to the edge of the plateau that in another instant, before I could well realise the horror of the event, they had fallen, locked in their deadly embrace, into the fiery depths of the lime-kiln below!

An inquest on the unrecognisable charred remains of the two miserable men has brought out the terrible sequel to this tale of brutality and madness. That afternoon, whilst the whole village was in commotion at the news, there arrived two policemen from Helmstone, asking for Ralph Dayner. It appeared that the lad who helped him to sail his craft, finding his master did not return in time to save the daylight on the previous evening, got one of the boatmen from the beach to aid him in taking her back to the neighbouring port; as he had had to do on many other occasions when, as my fisherman-friend had suggested, the burly ruffian had taken to a drinking bout. The man and the boy got into Helmstone (that place not being above an hour's sail off) just at nightfall; but on their way, not hear-

ing anything of Mrs. Dayner, they looked into the little fore-cabin, and, to their dismay, found the poor woman bleeding and almost senseless. She faintly told them that her husband had struck her a tremendous blow just before he left his boat in the morning; and they had hardly got her on shore when she died from its effects.

A dreadful retribution had overtaken her murderer, and I had witnessed it, as also had many others; for, besides being attracted to the spot by my shouts and whistlings, some of the natives of Pitsdean had caught sight of the beginning of that chase for life, and of course had followed it up. But, from a strange coincidence, accident, or whatever it may have been, the instrument selected by Fate to deal this act of retributive justice turned out to have been a fearfully fitting one, the miserable maniac being none other than the brother of Mrs. Dayner. The taint of madness was in the family, and once, long ago, it was proved he had attacked her husband, after some high words between them, and nearly strangled him. This was the first sign of that homicidal mania which, early leading to one murder, as the doctor had stated, terminated in the catastrophe I beheld. This accounted for Dayner's behaviour when he first heard of the lunatic being at large, and the abject terror he displayed on seeing him suddenly emerge from the chalk-pit. His nerves, shattered by his dissolute life doubtless, the recollection of those terrible fingers which had once already been at his throat, scared his wits utterly, and led to his seek-

ing safety in flight; the one course of all others the most fatal to have adopted in the presence of such a madman.

I doubt if I shall ever have the heart to finish my sketch. I fear I can never look upon its lines without seeing that awful death-struggle still going on upon the little green plateau which is so prominent a feature in the subject. At present the canvas stands with its face to the wall; and everything concerning the tragedy being now over, and my presence of no farther use, I think the wisest thing I can do is to pack up and quit the Pilot to-morrow morning, endeavouring as far as possible to forget my visit to Pitsdean, and all connected with it.

WATER (COLOUR) ON THE BRAIN.

CERTAIN seasons have certain diseases, which are, as it were, indigenous to them. Thus we naturally associate coughs, colds, and bronchitis with frost and snow ; in wet weather we have asthma and rheumatism ; and in the golden fruit-yielding autumn we may look for all sorts of choleraic disturbances ; but towards the middle of the London season, we will say the latter end of June, when bright sunshine and long days are beginning to make one think that green fields and rocky shores would be more agreeable than London streets, another complaint, peculiar, and but partially recognised, breaks out with unmitigated fury amongst a very large class of the educated community. Commencing at the time when the grass is being mown, it would almost seem as if the sweet smell of the fresh-cut crops, with which the air is then impregnated, was provocative as much of this disease as it is of hay-fever, which we know is apt to rage at the vernal period. However, it is a fact that a fever, induced by an insatiable desire to begin sketching in water-colour from Nature, then makes its appearance to a very alarming extent. Recipes for mixtures, washes, spongings, and blisterings are handed about from one victim to another, until

their sufferings at last become so acute that they are compelled to call in eminent physicians, in the shape of artists and drawing-masters, who consent to prescribe, administer specifics, and hold consultations at the rate of from seven shillings to a guinea and a half per hour.

How or why this rage for painting, this *cacoëthes pingendi*, as we may call it, this water (colour) on the brain, should so long have remained generally unrecognised as a distinct disease, or why its treatment and remedies have not found a larger place in the domestic pharmacopœia of society, are mysteries which we are incapable of solving; but as each succeeding year shows an immense increase in the number of those who suffer from it, it is to be hoped that the day is not far off when science, sound philosophy, indisputable doctrines, and methodical educational training will be brought to bear upon it, with equal force to that exercised upon other epidemics.

At present the victim to this dropsical malady, or fever, as it really is, whilst suffering so painfully that he feels there is no chance of getting better without seeking the advice of a skilful practitioner, is, at the same time, so perverse and lamentably ignorant of the only sure means by which a complete cure can be effected, that he expects miracles to be worked, and consequently flies from one adviser to another, vainly hoping to light upon a magician who can point out the royal road to recovery, or, in a word, cram him in the space of a few hours with an amount of medicine which,

to be of any service, would take half a lifetime for his system properly to absorb and assimilate.

In nine cases out of ten good counsel is sought too late in life. The constitution is too firmly established for ordinary remedial measures to take effect; and blame for unskilful treatment is frequently heaped upon the innocent professor, whilst in reality it should fall on the patient himself. In point of fact, this procrastination, perversity, ignorance, and injustice, this hallucination as to the powers of ordinary mortals, forms one of the chief features of the complaint, the first symptoms of which are usually developed in certain heated assemblies called 'private views,' or by the prospect of foreign travel, or a sojourn in beautiful scenery becoming imminent. Other minor causes also exist: but these circumstances, either separately or in combination, will assuredly provoke an attack of the malady upon a system predisposed in the slightest degree to receive it.

Of course there are people with constitutions so essentially insensible to the attractions of Nature or Art that nothing affects them; although these hardy individuals may be continually thrown, by the exigencies of society, into contact with all the provocatives of the disease. Parenthetically, it may be left an open question as to which class of individuals are really to be envied the most; for, although the feeling of convalescence, after a long course of treatment, is an exquisite delight, which those who have never suffered can never know, the other or more robust organisations are

spared an immense amount of agony, heartburning, and anxiety, which may lead them and us to doubt—as the schoolboy did about his alphabet—whether, with regard to sketching from Nature, it is worth while going through so much to learn so little!

However this may be, we will merely point out that the character of the ‘sketching mania’ is essentially contagious, spreading like wildfire through whole families, with a rapidity quite startling.

Indeed it has been known to be assumed for mere fashion’s sake, so prevalent is it in some quarters, and so very much is it thought to be, *de rigueur* to be attacked by it. Although, as we have stated, the spring develops it in its most acute forms, yet there are plenty of instances of unhappy persons who chronically suffer from it all the year round. Ladies of all ages more readily fall a prey to its insidious fascinations than do the sterner sex, which is natural, considering how amenable they always are to matters of mere ‘mode.’

Supposing the seizure to be really genuine, and not assumed, it bespeaks on the whole, perhaps, rather a healthy condition of brain. It bespeaks enthusiasm and a certain reverent love for the beautiful, with a refinement of mind highly to be commended, making the practitioner, who may be called in, regret more than he can express that he had not been consulted sooner. Fine natural capacities, combined with the evidence of a latent mechanical power thrown away, being always a sorrowful sight for him to contemplate, especially when,

in addition, he is asked by the unreasoning patient to work by magic.

Say, for instance, he is seated in his consulting-room or studio, when there arrives to him a patient, who commences something after this fashion.

‘O, you know, I wanted to ask you about sketching; I am going abroad very shortly, and want a few lessons; I should so like to be able to draw things—to bring back, you know, some reminiscences of my journey; I don’t want to do finished pictures, but just to be able to make rough dashing sketches of what looks pretty. I was recommended to you by Miss Woadhose; you taught her, I believe, and she really does paint so beautifully, that I would give anything if I could do as she does; she has made me quite envious.’

The professor then figuratively begins to feel the pulse of the attacked one; for surely does he know that the sketching-fever has set in, the chances being that it has been caught, in this instance, from a conversation with Miss Woadhose (who, by the way, from having been trained to the study of art from her childhood, is a very accomplished sketcher), whilst looking over her portfolio of last year’s Pyrenean sketches, combined also with a visit to one of the water-colour exhibitions, where the art-doctor’s attractive performances were very conspicuous.

‘Have you,’ he asks, ‘ever drawn from Nature at all?’

‘O dear, no—that is, I have tried once or twice, but I could not manage it, it is so very difficult; I want you to teach me how!’

‘Well, but what have you ever done in the way of drawing?’

‘O, very little; nothing, in fact, that I could show.’

No; and if she had, he does not care very much to look at it; for by this time, with his experienced eye, he has taken in all the conditions of the case; he knows everything about it.

Here is somebody, who probably cannot draw a straight line correctly, much less delineate the most ordinary natural objects, wanting to go forth in the course of a week or two armed with powers to represent subjects and scenery which nothing but the devotion and study of a lifetime could bestow.

If the doctor is a highly conscientious man, he will, supposing his diagnosis of the case to be correct, explain that the thing is impossible; he will urge that rudimentary study is absolutely necessary, that the use of the brush can only be successfully attempted after a long course of preliminary work with the lead-pencil (there being always, at this stage of the fever, a rabid desire on the part of the sufferer to rush headlong into colour); and if he does this, what follows? The patient simply votes him an incompetent bore, and goes off to some one with a more elastic conscience. To part with her guineas she is determined, because she fully believes that the power of sketching from Nature is just as purchasable as parasols or gloves.

This is a very virulent form of the disease, most difficult to treat, but one which illustrates very pertinently its chief characteristics; for whomsoever is con-

sulted, and whatsoever number of fees are paid to the physicians, very little hope can be entertained of a perfect restoration to health; at the best, the patient's want of success may merely induce the fever to pass from an acute into a chronic stage, and if in the end it does positively disappear altogether, it leaves the mind in a low-toned and morbidly-crabbed state upon all matters connected with art.

There may have been some little affection for it originally, and a slight appreciation of the beauties of Nature, when she was enjoying the pleasures of continental travel in perfect comfort, or during her visits to country houses when occasional excursions were made to picturesque parts of the park. She may have thought it would be very nice to while away an hour or two by making pretty pictures, as she might make wax-flowers or *do* 'potichomanie;' but the idea of taking up the study of drawing earnestly, and as if it was worth anything, has never entered her little head, though very possibly had she been trained to it as carefully and from the same age as she has been in music, there is no reason for supposing that the money expended on advice from her art-doctors would have been thrown away.

But now, alas, miserable creature, she must be pronounced almost an incurable! Unluckily, for every case of sketching fever which the physician may be called upon to deal with, and which is at all amenable to treatment, there are usually fifty of the nature just alluded to; for one person holding anything like reason-

able views and expectations on the subject, there are fifty in whose veins the poison of ignorance and want of thought are circulating to an alarming extent.

Men are by no means exempt from this sort of attack at the accepted sketching-time of year ; they display nearly as great a tendency to the same insane hallucinations about painting and art generally as women, but they are more open to therapeutic treatment, inasmuch as they are usually inoculated by the disease from a deeper reverence and love for Nature. Moreover, they are enabled to submit to the necessary blistering and physicking better than their sisters, being able to endure harder work and rougher weather.

Now, it has been urged by one or two eminent writers that this same fever is a very reprehensible, pernicious, and even wicked condition to allow oneself to drift into ; and when possibly it has sprung merely from a desire for praise, or to kill time, or as a fleeting fancy, or, worse than all, as a matter of fashion, their assertions are weighty enough ; but we are inclined to maintain that, in most instances, the mainsprings and germs of the malady are to be found in a highly commendable and more or less irresistible love for the beauties of Nature—in a deep-seated reverence and admiration for the charms of the country, and for the glories of sea, sky, and lake ; of mountain, wood, and waterfall ; snow-clad Alp, and rapid tearing torrents ; sylvan glades, or wild sea-shores. If the temperament of an individual be at all enthusiastic, such assuredly must be the cause which induces him to wish to sketch

from Nature ; for who, possessing anything like refinement of mind, or care for a rural life, can be insensible to the attractions of the landscape masterpieces from the Creator's hand !

We have not thought very much about these things, perhaps ; our early days may have been spent in cities, and far removed from the purifying influences of outdoor scenery ; our surroundings and education may in no way have predisposed us to thoughts either about Art or Nature, and consequently any latent affection we may have for the picturesque, the grand, and the ennobling has never been developed ; and it may be that it is only when some chance circumstance happens (late in life, or, at any rate, *so* late as to be *too* late) to throw us into the midst of fine scenery that we awake to a sense of the powers of appreciation which we possess, but which have hitherto lain *perdu*.

Then, for the first time, beginning to feel the inexpressible charm of contemplating the lovely landscape before us, what more natural desire than to show our reverence for it by attempting to perpetuate it ! Yes, *there* is the germ whence comes the artist's motive-power ; but being entirely ignorant of what is necessary to make this love for beauty available from an artistic or imitative point of view, we not unnaturally deem the impulse to represent what we admire sufficient to carry us over mere mechanical difficulties.

Having thus caught the fever, away we go to Messrs. Winsor & Newton, and lay out vast sums on delicious-looking materials ; but our first attempt to use them

by ourselves shows us what a blunder we have made, and *how* ill we really *are* ! Never mind ; we only want a few lessons, a hint or two as to *what* colours to use for skies, trees, water, or mountains, and doubtless we shall get better. Then we pay a visit to one of the water-colour galleries ; we know that a great many of the exhibitors there give lessons, so we have only to look round the rooms and select some practitioner for consultation whose style we like best, never even stopping to think which 'style' is really most like Nature ; we are simply guided in this stage of our disease by the attractive look of the pictures, and, what is worse, are generally drawn towards those which are the falsest and most meretricious.

We, however, are blissfully ignorant about all this sort of thing, so we go and get a lesson—that is, we go and sit at the feet, or at the elbow, of Mr. Bolingbroke Jones, the eminent drawing-master, whilst he makes a very pretty and charming little picture, or rather commences one ; for it is part of his policy to lead us to renew our visits as frequently as possible, and he adopts a system which may be likened to the serial sensational-romance plan of publication, leaving off at the expiration of the hour, or, as it were, at the end of the chapter, just at the most critical and interesting moment.

Well, it is not good for us to have too much of a sensation story, perhaps, at a time. Besides, it is an expensive amusement ; so we take away the drawing with only its first washes and forms just laid in (that

we may the better see how progressive the work is, says Mr. Jones), and try and copy it; which feat being accomplished after a fashion, and after we will not say what number of miserable failures, we are at liberty to have another lesson—to witness the carrying of the original production a stage further.

And so we go on, more or less rapidly, according to our means and to the amount of work we get through; also according to Mr. Bolingbroke Jones's engagements, for he is extremely busy at this time of year, having many patients to see, who are just as ill as ourselves, so that we are somewhat at his mercy as to the hours he can give us; for we must never forget that he is doing us a great favour by allowing us, on any terms, to see him at work, consequently he is very particular not to give us a moment beyond the time for which we are paying him. It depends on his character and disposition as to whether he vouchsafes to impart very much information *vivâ voce* while we are watching his dexterous fingers; and sometimes we have to extract any remark from him about his reasons for doing this or that by a corkscrew sort of process. He is a good-natured man, very likely, and would tell us anything that was of real use to us; but he is aware that the secret of his power does not lie in his using this or that particular colour for certain objects, and so he says nothing, knowing full well that we are not prepared, and have no intention even if it were possible, to devote a lifetime, as he has done, to the acquirement of the skill he displays, and with which we are so fascinated.

Well, at last the drawing is finished, and we have copied it; and we may consider ourselves extremely fortunate if we are not utterly disgusted with our performance. It has cost us five or six guineas, probably; but we are not allowed, on any account, to retain Mr. Bolingbroke Jones's original as a souvenir, because he will tickle *that* up with a little more work and sell it for twenty guineas most likely; indeed, the chances are we shall see it so priced next year at the water-colour exhibition.

No matter; when we go out of town we shall be able to put in practice all that we have learned during our lessons, at least all that we ought to have learned; for Mr. Jones has been most kind, and has shown us, if we have only had lessons enough, how he treats all sorts of subjects. He has shown us how he does trees of every description; skies, with or without clouds; evening, morning, or midday; sunset or moonlight have alike been put before us. He has also given us hints upon mountains, seas, and cliffs; likewise upon shipping, waves, and storms; upon rivers, ruins, and herbage; streams and lakes, interiors and exteriors, castellated mansions and Egyptian ruins, have one and all sprung into existence upon the canvas from his teeming and prolific brain. Yes, and all done out of his own head, as it seems to us. What a genius the man must be! And yet, if we are at all behind the scenes of the art-world, we shall hear him spoken of as a very good fellow—O yes; but as an artist?—O dear, no; very conventional, very drawing-masterish. Some

of his work used to be decent until he took to teaching; but that has quite ruined him as a painter, although he makes perhaps about two thousand a year by it. It rather astonishes us to hear persons, who should be good judges, speaking in this way of a man whose talent seems to us simply prodigious; it must be mere jealousy, that narrow-minded petty sort of feeling which exists amongst the members of all professional bodies. Bah! don't tell us that Mr. Bolingbroke Jones is not a first-rate artist.

Off then we start for our summer holiday, fully convinced that we have done, in a few weeks, everything that is requisite to arm ourselves with complete power to bring back a portfolio of charming sketches, productions that shall make the mouths of all our friends water, and which, whilst striking them with envy and admiration, shall infect them inevitably with the same virulent fever under which we have been labouring.

Miserable deluded mortals that we are! why, the failures and disappointments that we experienced in attempting to copy Mr. Bolingbroke Jones's drawings are nothing to those which await us when, surrounded by our costly paraphernalia, we shall seat ourselves on the three-cornered camp-stool, and make our first attempt to put into practice all that we have learned from him.

For a while, perhaps, we are inclined to believe that it is the novelty of the situation, the many little discomforts inseparable from it, such as wind, shifting light, glaring sun, caterpillars, midges, or staring 'yokels,' that affect our success. We cannot have spent all

the time and money that we have for nothing ; surely we know what we are about. Think how our doctor treated this sort of subject ; it is very similar to one he did for us only a week ago.

We are on the bank of a smooth flowing river ; tall graceful ash and elm trees rise with feather-like transparency against the sky on our left. Opposite on the right bank, stretching away into the middle distance, where the silver light of the stream is lost in umbrageous foliage, we have a series of rolling wood-clad hills sloping down to the water, on the placid surface of which they are wonderfully and exquisitely reflected. Beyond, and onward to the horizon, taller hills rise up, and in some cases, reaching almost to the dignity of mountains, lose their crests in wreaths of summer vapour. A few tender and wisplike clouds float across the soft blue of the heavens, whilst the rich autumn hues, and the afternoon light which suffuses all, subdue harmoniously the large masses of green which go to make up the chief colour of the sylvan scene.

Ay, and as we think of it we begin to be impressed with the fact of how utterly different Nature, rendered by the hand of Jones, is from Nature herself. Not a single tone, colour, or wash in his drawing really resembled what we see before us in the slightest degree. His colours were all glaring, gaudy, hot, and vicious-looking by the side of the pure tender grays and subdued yellows at which we are gazing, and which, rabid and fever-stricken as we are at present, we secretly admit please us infinitely less.

Besides, we could see how his sketch was done ; there was little or no detail compared with what so bothers us in Nature : it was all smooth, flat, easy-looking, and simple ; whilst everything here is complicated, varied, irregular, and difficult.

Nature, in fact, puts us entirely out. Difficult, indeed ! We may well say so ; but it is only after many and oft-repeated imbecile struggles to imitate in the slightest degree what we are looking at, that we are forced to admit that, at the best, supposing we are able to make a decent copy of another person's drawing, it is merely a mechanical, parrot-like ability, which in no way serves us when we have to originate or create, as we begin to do immediately we interpret Nature for ourselves.

It is only by degrees that we discover that the hand is of no use without the head ; and it is only by degrees that these large but simple truths break in upon us. It is only by degrees that we begin to discover what a very serious business we have entered upon ; it is only by degrees that we arrive at the conclusion that painting or sketching from Nature is no slight or easy matter, to be taken up or put down in an idle moment ; and it is only by degrees that the conviction forces itself upon us that, like every other power worth possessing, it can only be acquired by well-directed industry, by beginning at the beginning, taking no step for which we are not thoroughly prepared by due training and consideration, by unswerving perseverance and self-denial through a long course of time ; and that any

attempt to discover a royal road to it must lead to disappointment and mortifying failure.

Our complete recovery from the 'sketching mania' can only date from the discovery of these things, and from the moment in which we see that it would be just as absurd to expect Charles Hallé or any other pianist to teach us who may be ignorant of the very rudiments of music, to play a sonata of Beethoven's with execution and finish in half a dozen lessons, as to expect Mr. Bolingbroke Jones or anybody else to endow us in the course of a month with the ability to make a successful sketch from Nature, whilst, as is most likely the case, we are incapable of drawing the simplest object correctly.

A PRIVATE INQUIRY.

In Two Stages.

STAGE I.

CERTAIN business connected with the private-inquiry office, in which I was then employed, and which arose out of a large forgery that had recently been committed, obliged me some years ago to spend a great deal of time upon and about the departure-platform of one of our large northern railway termini. Although we could get no very definite clue to his whereabouts, it was believed that the individual chiefly, if not solely, concerned in the felony would sooner or later make his appearance there; and, as he was believed still to be in London, it fell to my lot to keep a sharp look-out for him at this station.

The circumstances which then came under my observation, and which I am about to relate, were at first only accidentally noted by me; and although I was afterwards mixed up in the affair, I was never actually engaged in it. Therefore I have no scruples in revealing what might at first appear to be professional secrets, particularly as I have had permission to tell the tale from the person chiefly interested.

Many and curious were the scenes of starting and

farewell that were constantly passing before me; and being naturally of an observant disposition, which had been farther developed by my training and occupation, it afforded me considerable entertainment to speculate upon the histories, and muse over the possible motives of pleasure or profit which were urging the passengers on their travels. The heavy trains for the north gave me the fullest scope for this amusement; whilst the shorter ones that went more frequently, and only some forty or fifty miles down the line—those trains, indeed, which have been chiefly instrumental in instituting the habit of sleeping a ‘little way out of town’—came as a sort of light interlude between the more serious business of departure.

Very different were the characteristics of the occupants of these short trains from those displayed by travellers bound for a longer journey, but they were not less entertaining. There were but few suburban passengers, however, until the afternoon, when there was a great rush of home-going citizens, evening paper and little black bag in hand.

Thus, things being very quiet on my side of the line after the morning mails had started, I usually embraced the opportunity of getting an early luncheon, and used to take a seat by the counter in the refreshment-room, which was here so situated as to command a full view of the office where all passengers for short journeys took their tickets. I had a good deal of watching and waiting, and was upon chatting terms with many of the officials, particularly with one buxom good-

natured dispenser of creature comforts at the aforesaid counter.

Unlike the majority of her sisterhood in such a situation, Mrs. Nellwall was an agreeable chatty woman, neither young nor very good-looking, a little given to finery, but cheery and kind-hearted, and, though slightly petulant, a very amusing gossip, especially if a little ruffled. At least this was the result of my experience.

I had been acting on it one morning, when I observed, among the few straggling passengers taking their tickets for a suburban train, a tall ladylike girl, very plainly but becomingly dressed, rush up to the ticket-office in some perplexity. She thrust her head far into the pigeon-hole, and held what appeared to be a very earnest conversation with the clerk. So long did she remain in this position, that a little knot of passengers accumulated behind her, waiting to get their tickets, and who began at last rather rudely to manifest their impatience at the delay she was causing them.

She drew back her head, hesitated, looked scared and bewildered at the people now gathering into a queue or crowd near her, and again thrust her head eagerly down to the clerk's desk. Again there were farther signs of impatience, this time accompanied by a slight hustling, which being followed up rather promptly, drove the unfortunate lady from her position, which was immediately occupied by fresh applicants for tickets.

The girl seemed now even more bewildered than at first. She glanced up at the clock, and as she did so the bell rang, and a porter coming to the door opening

on to the platform, closed one side of it, as with the other swinging in his hand, he called out,

‘Any more going on? Any more for the Selbeck train?’

‘Yes, a lot,’ was the reply from the crowd of those who had been till now prevented from getting their tickets. They, however, soon filtered through the narrow passage; and the porter’s call was again repeated more vehemently. The poor bewildered girl all this while seemed half-frantic, and at the last moment rushed up to the refreshment-counter where I was sitting.

‘I beg your pardon,’ she exclaimed, addressing my good-natured friend, ‘but I don’t know what to do. I have either lost or left my purse at home, and I don’t know what will happen to me if I miss this train. I have no money about me. Can you lend me ten shillings? or seven shillings the fare is. I really would not ask you, but O, what will become of me, what will become of me?’

I was about to offer a suggestion, but, before I could do so, or Mrs. Nellwall had time to answer her, for she seemed to hesitate a little, the young lady snatched her watch out of her girdle, unhooked its fastening, and thrust it over the counter pell-mell into my friend’s hand, continuing in the most excited manner:

‘O, pray take this, and lend me the money! O, please be quick! O, pray lend me the money, or I shall be too late, after all!’

By this time I had handed her three half-crowns, and in a moment she had flown like lightning back to

the office, obtained her ticket, and dashed like one demented through the now closing door, on to the platform out of sight. The engine-whistle followed immediately, but I saw through a side window that she just managed to catch the train, the guard putting her into a carriage but one second before it was in motion.

‘That was about as close a shave as I have ever seen. Poor child, what a state she was in!’ said I, resuming my old position. ‘I wonder who she is. I have seen her here before of a morning.’

‘O, yes,’ replied Mrs. Nellwall; ‘she is here regularly three times a week. I have noticed her for many months past; but she usually goes by an earlier train. I am glad she caught this, though, poor thing. She’s a governess, I expect; and I daresay it might have been serious if she had missed it. I would have lent her the money in a moment, but the truth is, I had not enough about me, and I dare not touch the till, you know, for such a purpose. Dear me! why, I would have trusted her of course! She need not have left her watch. I am sure there was no deceit behind those pretty eyes; besides, as I tell you, I know her face as well as I do yours. By the bye, I think I ought to give *you* her watch, since you lent her the money; though, indeed, I had rather trust her than you, if it came to that.’

‘Quite right,’ I replied, smiling; for we were upon very good terms, and a little badinage was habitual between us. ‘No, no; you must keep the watch, and I’ll return good for evil, for you see I would rather trust you

than her. I would not have lent her the money unless she had left something as a deposit. By the way, let me look at the watch; perhaps it may enlighten us as to who she is.' Saying which, I took it from Mrs. Nellwall, who was already eagerly inspecting it and turning it from side to side.

It was of Geneva manufacture, and one of the best sort, but certainly not what is called a 'lady's watch.' It was apparently new, notwithstanding a crack it had right across its white face. It had no chain or guard *en suite*, but was attached to a short clumsy-looking chain of black gutta-percha, with a hook at the farther end. I opened the case. There was the maker's name, 'Léping, Genève,' also the number, 4080; then, engraved just below it, was 'J. M. P. to C. P.' Of course there was nothing to be gleaned from this; and I handed the watch back to Mrs. Nellwall with a suspicious-sounding 'hem!'

'How horrid of you!' she said as I did so. 'The idea of doubting that poor young lady's word! Why, she is as sure to come back as the carriage she got into. Besides, I should think this watch is worth a precious deal more than seven-and-sixpence. Now I am determined, after what you say, that she sha'n't be under any obligation to you. I'll go and borrow the money, and pay you this moment. O, what suspicious creatures men are! I am quite angry with you!'

And she bustled away to the inner penetralia, returning soon after with seven-and-sixpence, which, despite all my laughing protests, she insisted on my

taking. She really seemed seriously indignant with me for my doubts. I apologised, but said,

‘ You know it is my business not to trust anybody. I can’t even trust some people out of my sight ; and, after all, you may find it as well to be cautious about unprotected females.’

Notwithstanding that everything I had said to Mrs. Nellwall had been in pure joke, she did not see it, and I failed in restoring her to good-humour. So, my efforts being in vain, and my time up, I was obliged to leave her unappeased.

Now it so happened, very unexpectedly, that from information received at my office on that day, my duties had not to be resumed at this station, and more than nine months elapsed before chance again took me there on entirely different business. The little episode of the young lady and the watch, however, had not escaped my memory, and it was almost the first thing I asked about, after I had said ‘ How do you do ?’ to Mrs. Nellwall.

‘ Well,’ I said half cynically, though I had really no doubts, ‘ of course she came back and redeemed her property ?’

But to my intense astonishment, Mrs. Nellwall replied, with a very grave face,

‘ O dear, no, sir ! I can’t think what has happened. Do you know, she has never been back ; and I have never seen or heard of her from that day to this.’

Bearing in mind the way I had been twitted in the first instance for my suspicions, despite my present

surprise, I could not refrain from smiling ironically as I said,

‘Ah, you see I was not so wrong, after all. You would have been done out of your money, if she had not left an equivalent. Soft-hearted creatures, women ! you take every tale of distress for gospel, if it is only properly urged. However, it is a little funny that it should not have been worth her while to get back her watch. This makes the case more doubtful than ever ; it looks very much now as if the watch had not been hers to leave. What have you done with it ?’

‘O dear me, I have no patience with you, to take such an unkind, such an unfair idea into your head. If you had never seen her before, if I had never seen her before, it would have been a different thing ; but you know I told you she had been coming here for months, and I feel as confident as possible that it must have been something very serious that has prevented her returning. She may be dead, or a hundred things may have happened.’

‘Yes, but what have you done with the watch ?’

‘O, I have kept it, of course,’ replied Mrs. Nellwall impatiently. ‘I spent a sovereign in advertising, and I can’t afford to do any more. I said that any one giving a description of what was engraved inside should receive it ; and, O dear me, the wickedness of some people ! Why, I had two brazen-faced creatures, who came here one day, wanting to make out that they were friends of the lady, that she had sent them, and they did all they could to try and get me to let them have a

peep at the watch, before they attempted to say what was inside it ; but I was not quite such a fool as that, whatever you may think about women being soft. Of course they could not tell me what the initials were, and then they pretended they had forgotten, and that they would go back and ask, and come again. Impertinent hussies ! I shall advertise once more, and if the rightful owner turns up, she can have it ; if not, it will do very well where it is ;' and she touched, with an air of no little vanity and satisfaction, the chain of the watch, which I then saw she was wearing in her belt.

' Yes,' I went on, ' that is your best plan ; and I should be inclined to add to your advertisement, " Left by a lady, &c., a watch, presumed to be stolen." '

But Mrs. Nellwall here again indignantly interrupted me with,

' I shall do nothing of the kind ; I don't presume it is stolen ; never did—never shall. You may, if you like. You have nothing to do with it, I am glad to say. Yes, I am very glad I did not let you lend her the money.'

' So am I. I should not like to be a receiver of stolen goods,' I replied, still in a bantering tone, for I did not in reality believe that the young lady was herself a thief. I flattered myself I could read character rather better than that ; yet I could not help chaffing Mrs. Nellwall a little, especially as I thought it was quite possible that what I said was in the main correct.

However, I had again carried my assumed incredulity too far for Mrs. Nellwall's temper ; she refused

to listen to any explanation of what I meant; and it was only at the expiration of two or three more chance visits to the station, when the question of the watch was no longer discussed, that we fell into our old and amiable tone of civilities.

Another two months passed, and I once more had occasion to go to the northern terminus. There were rather more people about than usual. A train was on the point of starting, and everybody connected with the refreshment department was busy. Some question arose as to the right time; and I saw Mrs. Nellwall draw out the young lady's watch and look at it. A well-dressed young man, whom I knew by sight at the theatres and other places of amusement as a rather fast fellow about town, standing at the buffet, here said,

'Will you allow me to look at your watch? mine has stopped, and the station-clock must surely be wrong.'

Without hesitation, and in a self-satisfied way, Mrs. Nellwall held it towards him; for I had remarked she seemed now quite accustomed to the use of this appendage; so quickly do women adapt themselves to all ornament and luxury.

'Hallo,' cried the gentleman, as he peered over the counter, with his face close to Mrs. Nellwall's hand, 'where did you get that watch? Why, it is mine. I should know it amongst a thousand. It was stolen from me about a year ago. How did you come by it?'

'Honestly,' said the woman quite readily, but

drawing back. 'If it is your watch, perhaps you can tell me what there is inside the case?'

'Of course I can,' said the gentleman, 'in a moment, and the number and maker's name also. It is 4080, Léping, Genève, from J. M. P. to C. P. Eh, is it not so?'

'That's quite right,' said Mrs. Nellwall, rather astonished.

'Well, then, you'll hand it over, please. This is a stroke of luck I did not expect,' said the gentleman, brightening.

This little incident of course excited some interest amongst the knot of people gathered round about our end of the counter. I here stepped forward, and taking the gentleman aside, briefly explained the circumstances about the young lady, as I had witnessed them : at the same time informing him who I was.

'Now, sir,' I said, 'it is all right; you shall have your watch, of course, if it is yours; but you must give me your name and address, and you must allow me to see a little farther into this matter.'

'O, by all means,' replied the young fellow; 'here is my card, and I feel quite safe in your hands. I can only tell you, as you may see, that C. P. are my initials, and I'll give you proofs that the letters J. M. P. are those of the person who gave me the watch. I have nothing more to tell you than that I knew it by the crack down its face, and that I was robbed of it one night more than a year ago, as I was coming out of the Opera; I don't know how, or by whom. There was a great

crowd in the crush-room—rather a mixed set of people, perhaps ; for I recollect it was not a subscription-night, and the first intimation I had of my loss was finding my briquet chain hanging loose from my waistcoat.'

As he said this, I beckoned to Mrs. Nellwall, who came round the counter to where we stood.

'This chain,' continued the gentleman, touching it, 'does not belong to me, nor the hook at the other end. Only the watch is mine. What? do you say you advertised it, and that a young lady left it in pawn for her fare? How long ago?'

'Nine or ten months,' was the reply.

'Hem,' said he, 'that's strange; that's about the time. What was she like?'

And we described her.


'Yes; that tallies. It's a curious coincidence; this is very odd; I should like to know more about it;' and then, as if to himself, he said, 'Egad, I wish I could prove it against her; that would be a sell for the old boy. It would be almost worth while to get on her track. Well, never mind, I can't wait now. Here, you take the hook and chain; I won't have anything to do with them,' giving them back to Mrs. Nellwall, together with a five-pound note, adding, 'I daresay that will cover all your expenses and trouble. Now I shall only just have time to catch my train. This is a pretty start; but I'm deuced glad, though!—Look here, Mr. Diver,' he continued in an undertone to me, 'you know where to find me. I shall be back in town to-morrow night, and I shall be glad to have a little conversation

with you about this affair. It may be worth my while to give you a job. Call on me the day after to-morrow at twelve o'clock, and we'll talk it over.'

So saying, and pocketing the watch, away dashed the young gentleman in great haste to catch the train.

'Well,' cried Mrs. Nellwall, in a tone and with a look of blank and profound astonishment, 'if I ever did know such a man as you! You are enough to aggravate a saint! To think of your letting that whipper-snapper young chap cut off with my watch in that manner. You believe a fellow like that, with his nasty, sly, bad face, and doubt that pretty young woman. And look here, what he has left me. I did not want his money; I would much rather have kept the watch; it was worth a great deal more than five pounds—besides, it was very handy and pretty;' and she could hardly repress a sigh for the loss of what she by this time had begun to regard as her own property.

'Never mind,' I said; 'I'll take the responsibility. You keep your money; he's all right; here's his card, with a name and address on it; that's sufficient guarantee. I thought I knew him by sight—for you know it's my business to remember faces; he's always about town; a fast wild young chap; not good for much, I daresay; but all square and above-board. I could lay my hand upon him at any time. The watch belongs to him without doubt. Besides, he knew what was engraved inside it, to the number and the letter; and I don't believe in double-sighted youths, Mrs. Nellwall, if you do. I never doubted the young lady herself,



although he seems to do so from what he muttered. I never doubted but what she got the watch honestly ; but I had a sort of suspicion, from the first time I looked at it, that she did not know its history. J. M. P. and C. P. had nothing to do with her, depend upon it. She never had any luggage, I suppose ?

‘ O, no, it was not likely,’ said Mrs. Nellwall ; ‘ they seldom have any, these short fares, or take any refreshment. She never had anything in her hand beyond a roll of music, as far as I saw.’

‘ No,’ said I, musing ; ‘ I never saw her with any either, and she never left anything in the cloak-room, I daresay. Ah, well ; I must think about this. If that young gentleman likes to make it worth my while (and he seemed to think that he might), I’ll find out who stole his watch, difficult though it may be ;’ and then, with a vain endeavour to convince my good friend that I knew what I was about and to console her for the loss of her toy, I bade her ‘ good-bye,’ assuring her that she never need be afraid now of the young lady coming back to redeem her pledge.

True to the appointment he had made, I called on Mr. Charles Pitford, for such was his name, at the address on his card. The house, situated in a wealthy but not a very fashionable neighbourhood, was stated by the *Court Guide* to be inhabited by a Mr. Pendleton. I therefore presumed that the young man occupied the apartments on the ground-floor, into one of which I was ushered, and which was fitted up with all sorts of bachelor-like appointments and luxuries.

After proving to me conclusively that the watch was his property—which indeed was unnecessary, for by the description he had originally given of its marks he was fully entitled to claim it—he bade me take a seat, and then went on to say something to this effect:

‘Revenge, Mr. Diver, is a luxury some people think worth a good deal. I don’t; but at the same time, although the affair is not of much importance to me, if you could bring home the robbery of that watch to that young lady, I might be inclined to make you a handsome present. Now I think I can give you the means of doing so, provided only you can discover her whereabouts, and that she turns out to be the person I suspect. Your difficulty, however, lies in finding her; for her family, not having the least idea of her movements at the time she disappeared—now more than ten months ago—could gain no clue whatever to the direction in which she might have gone. In fact, the prospect of finding her seemed so utterly hopeless, that really not much trouble was taken. Now it appears to me that for the first time we have a clue. I lost my watch shortly before she disappeared. It was found about the same time in her possession; and the natural conclusion is that she stole it. Is it not so?’ he inquired after a pause, seeing I made no remark.

‘Possibly,’ I then said; ‘it is strong presumptive evidence.’

‘Very well, then; find her out, and we make the charge against her. Her name is—’

‘Stop, stop!’ I cried, interrupting him; ‘let me

understand you, sir. Do I glean that you only offer me a reward in the event of my bringing the theft home to her? Do I understand from what you say that you would not be prepared to pay me for the time I might spend in a fruitless search after her; in a word, that you would not pay anything unless I finally succeed in taking her?’

‘Precisely so,’ he said; ‘only upon her conviction should I be prepared to pay one penny. Then, yes, then,’ he added, clenching his teeth savagely, ‘I might be tempted to pay handsomely; for then I could at once and for ever clear her from my path. I should then have no farther cause to fear her as an obstacle to my present or future prospects.’

Then rising and taking an impatient stride or two across the room, he half muttered,

‘But no; until then, I won’t throw my money away upon her; she has cost me too much. She has already stood too long between me and my rights; and as I am free from her now, why need I bother myself any more about the matter?’

‘Just as you please, sir,’ I said; ‘only I can’t undertake the affair upon such terms. A long time has elapsed, and I might have to spend weeks and months before I came across her. You can’t expect that I should do so without payment.’

‘Well, I suppose not, Mr. Diver; you know your own business best, and if this is your view of it, I presume it will be useless for me to trouble you at present with any further details about her.’

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me back from a vessel lying in the Mersey, whither, five years after these events had happened, some business had obliged me to go. 'There they are now, all coming down the gangway,' added the man; 'and a pretty ragged crew they look!'

Truly they did; bush-life and the gold-fields did not seem to have mended things with them much. Forlorn, and for the most part ragged, these poor steerage passengers of a huge vessel that had been moored against the quays came straggling, almost reluctantly it seemed, into the bustling thoroughfares of Liverpool, as I was emerging from the dock gates.

They gazed helplessly around, hardly knowing which way to turn, bereft as they were now of what had been at least a certain shelter for the last five or six months. Returned to a land from which they had doubtless started full of bright hopes and aspirations, their condition was indeed pitiable; for it was impossible not to feel that each presented the embodiment of a story of blighted prospects and baffled endeavours. There were not many of them, however; and I was on the point of turning away from the melancholy sight, when I saw a woman with a child in her arms, who at once arrested my steps. I have said that my business partly consisted in remembering faces; therefore it is not wonderful that I at once recognised this one. I had no doubt whatever; I knew her instantly, terribly changed though she was.

Thus chance seemed determined that I should be in some sort a watcher of her fortunes; and remember-

ing what I had undertaken at Mr. Pitford's request, I immediately accosted her. She did not remember me, and seemed even to doubt for some moments that I was the person who had lent her seven-and-sixpence for her fare to Selbeck.


'Now,' I said, when I had at last made her recollect the circumstance, 'it appears to me you are in want of greater help than ever. Tell me why you never came back to fetch your watch. Tell me this, and anything more you can about yourself; and if I can be of any assistance to you, I will.'

She drew back, and the same expression of blank bewilderment that I had remarked five years ago, when she could not get her ticket, came over her face. I have never attempted to describe her, because I am not skilful with such subjects with my pen, and here, I fear, standing as we are at the corner of a crowded street, is not a fitting opportunity. Come with me, then, my reader, to the private parlour of a respectable inn of the neighbourhood, whither I have persuaded her with much difficulty to accompany me. Look at her, seated by the fire, with her child in her lap, and then listen to her story, which with much reluctance, and only after she was quite convinced of my identity, would she consent to tell.

'My home was miserable, and for many years there was not perhaps a more unhappy creature on this earth than I. I was in despair at last, and grew desperate. It seemed that nothing could add to my wretchedness; yet, alas, I was tasting but a tithe of the bitterness in

store for me. I had not learned to suffer in those days, and rebelled against my lot. I had not learned that sorrow may be sent for a deeper purpose than we poor human beings can at first divine. Any way, I have been punished for my rebellion, and have understood too late that nothing can justify an outrage upon duty and filial affection. I did at one time honour my father; and had I only been given strength to withstand temptation, and had had experience enough to make excuses for his neglect of me, I had not perhaps have become the wreck you see me.

‘To be as brief as I can, my case was this: My mother died when I was but an infant, and I grew up, to find, in the place of the tender love and anxious care that would have been mine had she lived, coldness and neglect, to which, as years went on, was added harshness and dislike from the woman in whom poor father, God help him! had sought to find for me a mother, and for himself a consolation for the angel he had lost. This stepmother of mine had also been married, and had a son about my own age, who, as we grew up together, seemed to share his mother’s cruel animosity towards myself. My father, from ill-health and a naturally indolent disposition, which increased as age came on—for he was much older than his second wife—became a nonentity in his own household. He was never considered in anything, and any show of affection towards me, or any attempt to shield me from the persecution I was enduring, only increased threefold the rigour with which I was treated by mother and son; whilst it



brought on my father frequently an amount of vituperation and cruelty that makes my heart sick to think of, and which he had not the courage or energy to resent, or to attempt to clear himself from.

‘Thus, by degrees, the little intercourse we had held together dwindled away; for I had sense enough to abstain from anything like open demonstration of my love towards him, knowing what it would beget, and he seemed equally anxious to avoid doing anything to increase the discord in the house. Thus it fell out that by the time I was seventeen, the active hatred that at first had been shown me became passive, and I was utterly neglected. No notice was taken of my proceedings, no interest expressed on any point connected with me; and when I finally left the day-school at which I had been educated, no regard was had to me whatever. So long as I kept the hours of the house, I was at full liberty to go in and out whither and whenever I pleased. My stepmother had entire command of everything. All money transactions passed through her hands; and though I know my father allowed me fifty pounds a year for my dress and small requirements, I never received a quarter of it; for this woman scraped and hoarded every penny she could out of her husband’s ample income to supply the extravagances and spendthrift habits of her son; and even the little she was obliged to let me have was begrudged by him, and many a time has he openly cursed me for, as he used to say, keeping him short of money.

‘He was a wild worthless fellow, always in debt,

and constantly drawing upon the resources which his mother had at her command, through my father's apathy and want of firmness. Well, about this time, and when things were in the most miserable condition at home, a schoolfellow, whom I had often made my confidante, and who consequently knew how I was situated, wrote and asked me if I should like to undertake the instruction of two younger sisters of hers in music, for which, if I may say it, I had some natural taste and ability. It would, she said, give me a little occupation and take me somewhat out of the wretchedness in which I was living, besides adding in a degree to my scanty resources. So it was settled that I should go three times a week to Selbeck, where her family resided, and where I spent for many months the only happy hours I have ever known since early childhood.

'I said nothing of this engagement at home, or it might have been interfered with from sheer opposition and perversity; and, as I have hinted, no heed ever being taken of my proceedings, my absence from home these three days a week passed without comment, probably without observation.

'It was during this time that I first saw the man to whom I owe the climax of misery which my always miserable life has reached. I pass over the way in which we first met—for it is of no consequence—and the way in which he played upon my affections. It was the first time that love had ever been roused within me, and he did not scruple to possess himself of the bountiful profusion with which I showered it upon

him. I think, indeed, for a time he returned it, as far as his nature would allow him; but it never prevented his lying and misrepresenting himself and his position to me in every respect. He professed to be an Australian by birth; that he had come to Europe on business; that he was staying at Selbeck to recover his health, which had suffered from this climate, before he returned to the Antipodes, where he made himself out to be a great land-owner; and promised that if I would consent to become his wife and go back with him, he would make me a happy woman, that I should live in affluence and luxury, and that no queen should be more cared for than I. Can it be wondered at that I was dazzled and captivated, and that at last I consented? I had no tie here, and have I not hinted that I was madly, deeply in love? So it was arranged that on one of the days that my engagement took me to Selbeck I should not return, but that I should join him there, whence by a cross-road we could reach a main line of railway, and catch a night train for Liverpool, where on the following day we were to be secretly married, and whence on the next the ship would sail for our destination.

'Secrecy was insisted on by my lover as a safeguard against any possible interruption from my people, and I was not even allowed to confide, for the same reason, in my old schoolfellow and friend.

'Looking back over this lapse of time at the morning of that day when I took the fatal step, it seems to me that I can now clearly see how the hand of

Providence, working with trifling instruments, was stretched out to save me from my fate. I can see it, as clearly as if written in a book, that some invisible spirit of good then swayed, without her knowing it, the mind of my stepmother, and how it was bent upon making her the means of saving me, against her will ; for surely do I believe that, could she have known my purpose, she would rather have aided my departure than have thrown an obstacle in its way. Could she have devised a plan of ridding the house of my presence, she would have done it ; and this same guardian angel that was watching over me, whilst striving to avert my ruin, at the same time sought to punish my tormentor by keeping me by her own act under the same roof as herself. If this had not been the case, why, of all mornings in the year, should she have selected this particular one to request me, contrary to every precedent, to assist her in making up some household accounts, and to insist on my doing it before I went, as she was pleased to phrase it, "trapesing about the streets," and by so doing cause me to miss my usual train ?

'Again do I see in what followed the hand of Heaven still making an effort to stay me in my downward path, by causing me, in my hurry and confusion to get away in time for the second train, to leave behind the small hand-bag I had prepared for my journey, and which contained my purse.

'You will call these ideas mere fancies, the result of a too sensitive and excited imagination—you will tell me that they were nothing but accidental coin-

cidences ; but I will say they are to me unmistakable evidence of a guiding Power ; and do not smile incredulously when I add, that not only was this the doing of my good genius, but when I, by my headlong impetuosity and energy, foiled its good intentions and crushed it to atoms, my evil star rose high in the ascendant, and found means in that accursed watch to give me the aid that in my blindness to the future seemed the most grateful.

‘ Had I not been able by its help to get money for my ticket, I could not have reached Selbeck at the time appointed for our departure for Liverpool, and he would have gone without me ; for he had so laid our plans, he said, that it was absolutely necessary for us to fulfil them to the very letter. And did I not then believe every word he uttered ?

‘ I cannot dwell at any length on the life that succeeded my marriage and the voyage out. Too soon, alas, did I discover how I had been deceived, not only in the prospects which my husband had held out to me, but in his character also. He made little effort to conceal the real state of things when we were once at sea.

‘ All the property he possessed was some five hundred pounds he had in his pocket, and he laughed cruelly at the surprise I expressed on learning that he had never been in Australia in his life, and hinted broadly that he was only going there now because England had become dangerous ground for him, and that, in fact, if he had not escaped from Selbeck at the very

moment he did, it would have been too late, a clue to his whereabouts having been obtained. In addition I discovered he was a gambler and a drunkard, and that he was tabooed soon after our departure by every passenger on board, from his having attempted to cheat at cards; so that by the time our voyage was over, I found myself landed in a strange country, and allied to a man whose antecedents would not bear the slightest ray of light.

‘It matters little now what I say of him, and to conceal the truth will serve no purpose. He was a worthless scamp from the beginning, had been an embezzler and forger, and had not scrupled to commit any mean and paltry crime whenever occasion offered.

‘He did not at first absolutely ill-treat me; but by degrees, from the hard straits we were sometimes put to for a living (for he soon squandered the five hundred pounds), and when our difficulties were increased by the birth of this poor child, he grew morose and savage, and finally abandoned me in the streets of Melbourne, where I had all but to beg my bread. After a time I learned accidentally, from a newspaper which fell into my hands at a refreshment-house, two facts which induced me to make a vigorous effort to return to England. They were, first, that my husband had been committed to penal servitude for a daring robbery; and secondly, by an extract copied from a London newspaper, that my stepmother had been killed by a railway accident. Then I thought that, if by chance I could once more reach my father’s side, some of the past

might yet be retrieved ; that he, now relieved from his life-long surveillance, would perchance open his arms again to me ; and that if only in time to smooth his dying hours, I should get one last glimpse of the early affection he had bestowed upon me, and of which, during the greater part of my life, I had been so cruelly deprived.

‘ Here, then, I am, bent on this purpose ; and if I can but achieve it, if I can but receive one faint smile of recognition and forgiveness from him, I may yet die in peace. But how I am now to get to London, I know not. What little money I collected by my own hard work to enable me to cross the sea is nearly spent ; and whether, after all, I shall ever see my father’s face again, seems almost as doubtful as ever. I feel as far off him now as when the whole world lay between us.’

This long narrative had been spoken by the poor woman with many a tearful interruption, which would have been useless and distracting to have introduced. As she finished, however, her spirit and courage gave way entirely, and clasping her child closer to her bosom, she buried her face in her hands, weeping bitterly a long while. I was loth to disturb her, and only when her tears had somewhat abated did I venture to say,

‘ Do you mind letting me know a little more about that watch, and how you came by it ? for I must tell you that it was clearly proved to be stolen property.’

‘ How !’ she exclaimed, with a momentary return of the same old bewildered look ; ‘ stolen ? Yet why

should I feel surprised ? I might have guessed as much. He lived by theft, and doubtless all he ever had was dishonestly obtained. Still the initials were his as well as mine, and he professed to have had them engraved upon the watch on purpose for me.'

'By "him," I suppose you mean your husband. What was his name ?' I inquired.

'James Marcus Pearson,' she replied ; 'at least, so he called himself ; and yet truly it was quite likely to have been only one of the many aliases he passed by. He may have taken that name to match the initials ; and so, when he found out what mine were, he made use of that coincidence also ; for he was clever enough to twist any chance to his own purpose. He gave me the watch not long after I first knew him. He bought it, he told me, in Geneva ; the crack across its face arose, he said, from sending it badly packed to London from Selbeck to have the engraving done. He promised to buy a chain for it as soon as we reached Liverpool, and when he could choose one himself. In the mean time I used the old gutta-percha guard and hook which I had by me. This is how I came by that watch.'

'Then your initials,' I said, 'were C. P. May I ask what your name was ?'

'Caroline Pendleton,' she replied ; and I of course remembered the name as that of the occupant of the house where I had called on Mr. C. Pitford. My conclusions were obvious.

'What was your stepmother's name ?' I asked.

'Pitford,' she answered.

'Ay, and she, by marrying your father, changed it to Pendleton; but I mean, what was her Christian name or names?'

'Jane Mary,' was the reply.

'Just so,' I said. 'J. M. P. to C. P.—that accounts for it; the watch was given by her to her son, and to him it belonged. Did it never occur to you at the time,' I went on, 'that those same initials also belonged to these two members of your family, as well as to you and your lover?'

'No,' she said slowly and hesitatingly, 'it never did; yet, good heavens! is it possible? Why, I wore the watch for weeks whilst I was under the same roof with them both.'

'Without a doubt you did,' I said; 'and had you by any accident happened to have exposed its face, either of them would have recognised it, and I don't question, from the animus they bore you, that they would have scrupled to have accused you of stealing it; as it was, you luckily kept it concealed in your girdle, where, of course, it could not be identified, and the old gutta-percha guard and hook, being your own, passed unheeded. Nevertheless, you had a narrow escape from a danger of which you had no idea.'

'Indeed, yes,' she said; 'little, truly, was I conscious of the peril I ran in every way and from all sides when I accepted that fatal gift. And now I remember, not very long before it was in my possession, I did hear something about my stepbrother losing his watch that

his mother had given him. He made some little stir about it; but, like the rest of his losses, it was quickly made up to him, and we heard no more about it, and I naturally never associated—how could I?—my gain with his loss. I could not have suspected the risk I was running. But how,’ after a pause she added, ‘did you come to know all this? How did you come to know that the watch that *I* left as a pledge belonged to my stepbrother?’

I then explained under what circumstances I had become acquainted with Mr. Charles Pitford five years ago, and how I had been deputed by him to seek her out. ‘Now,’ said I, ‘all this is very unprofessional of me; I have no business to be telling you these things, and extracting from you a story that might be used in evidence against you; but I never believed from the first that *you* knew the real history of the watch, far less that you had stolen it. I no more believed it when you left it at the refreshment-counter, or when you even did not return for it—no, I no more believed it then than I do now, after hearing your tale. If I had been no better able to read character than that, or if I had been deceived about you, I should be but a poor master of my trade. Yet I have one or two more questions to ask you, with a view to confirming a suspicion which crossed my mind while you were giving me this sketch of your life. What was your husband like?’

‘O, he was a tall, dark, handsome, soldier-like looking man, and was letting his beard grow when I first

knew him, and by the time we sailed it had become long and bushy.'

'Ah, I thought so! And had he not a mole on his left cheek, which his beard would hide?'

'Yes, truly.'

'I thank you,' I said; 'that's all I wanted to know.' For in this description I at once recognised the person I was on the look-out for, connected with the forgery at the time I first saw Miss Pendleton at the railway-station.

He gave us the slip, and his disappearance tallied with the day on which she left the watch, and I by his escape was relieved, as will be remembered, from farther duty there. We did not get our hint of his whereabouts quite soon enough; he was too quick for us; and he was perfectly right in telling her that his safety depended on his plans being carried out to the letter, and that a clue had been got to his hiding-place at Selbeck.

Thus was established another link in my acquaintance with, and my interest in, this unhappy woman. In my heart I had never believed her guilty of theft; I was now more than ever convinced of her innocence. I had been tempted by the prospect of reward to promise that she should not escape me if chance ever threw her in my way. It had now so done, and I had found her by no dexterity or effort of my own. Should I be very culpable if I neglected to do my duty to the letter? (which would have been to have taken her into custody immediately) and might I not hope to derive a more substantial reward from my own feelings by neglecting

it? I thought so; but as I had not heard or seen anything of Mr. Charles Pitford for several years past, I determined to look him up, and try and sound him as to his present views on the subject.

Possibly time might have slaked his thirst for revenge—a thirst which, by his stepsister's story, was somewhat explained to me, but which had not improved my opinion of my would-be employer. So when I had brought her to London, as I did the next day, and placed her in security, I called at Mr. C. Pitford's residence, and was not a little relieved to find that all my perplexity was cleared away by discovering that the young man had died soon after the loss of his mother. The reckless course of life that I knew, from observation, he had always indulged in had been speedily brought to an end by intemperance, and the poor old weak-minded father of the girl was the only surviving member of that miserable household.

I had the gratification soon after of restoring her to his arms; and I believe no reward which I have ever received, or ever shall receive, for 'making successful private inquiries' can equal that which I obtained in knowing that, through my aid, the daughter at last realised her earnest hope—the hope of being able to soothe her father's declining years, and in the restoration of his love to regain a portion of that happiness which, for a brief interval as a child, she had once experienced.

BACK TO TOWN.

GETTING chilly at the seaside now, very chilly ! Bright and pleasant for an hour or two in the middle of the day, but very chilly morning and evening.

The evening !—ugh ! The evening !—the very word gives one a shudder. Closing in as it does at five o'clock, what is a poor cockney to do with himself,—one who looks upon the country as only a place to be inhabited in fine weather, and whose only resources when there are lying stretched flat on the grass in the cooling shade, or on the verge of some breezy headland or pebbly shore ; whose only object in leaving his dear delightful London is to get a little fresh air and quiet, and to escape the dulness which settles on the city between the 1st of August and 29th of September ? Neither sportsman, yachtsman, artist, or agriculturist, what has he to do with green fields or breezy coasts when it gets dark at five o'clock ?

That last gale from the south-west has regularly broken up the weather and the beach and the sand and the pleasure and everything. The esplanade lawn, now spongy and sodden, is strewn with shingle and seaweed, with which the beach is so heaped up that there is no getting down to the sea with a dry boot, even if

you are regardless of the shoals of jumping sea insects, which spring up at every pressure of your foot, or the buzzing, noisome, pestilential flies, which infect the 'vrack' in myriads after an hour's sunshine.

There are only three bathing-machines left on the shore ; the remainder have been drawn away across the shingly gravel paths and along the deserted streets by the stockingless short-trousered boy, on his raw-boned and rope-harnessed horse, to be stowed away for the winter in mysterious stables, backyards, and carpenters' outhouses in the rear of the town.

Two forlorn bathing-women sit, spider-like, hopelessly looking for a venturesome damsel sufficiently robust to face the bracing wind, and encounter the thumping and bumping of the somewhat dangerous breakers that now come continuously tumbling on the sand. There is great excitement if one really does make her appearance, and the machine is lowered just far enough to wet the bottom step, amidst great expectation from a very small audience that has congregated on that part of the beach, which but a week or two ago was as thickly thronged with loungers as the Lady's Mile in the height of the season.

Most of the pleasure-boats have disappeared ; the few that are left are drawn high and dry (if anything can be dry after the weather we have had) across the lowest path of the promenade, and huddled close around the capstan, which has almost been washed out of its foundations. Ropes, blocks, anchors, chains, nets, oars, spars, lobster-pots and fishing-lines, a barrel, a tub, a

broken seat, three or four dank bathing-gowns, a yellow oilskin cap with white binding and strings, grotesquely fitted on to the head of the capstan, and various other marine properties, indicate plainly that they have been collected from outlying places with a view to their speedy entombment for the winter.


With the exception of one of the large boats, which will now and then be utilised for fishing purposes by the bluff but somewhat lazy proprietor, who combines in himself the representation of the boating, bathing, and fishing interest of the place, there will be no further use for any of this paraphernalia until next season, and it is on its way to the seclusion already accorded to the bathing-machines.

The troop of donkeys are beginning to get a little rest, and it is thought unnecessary to bedeck more than one or two with those white, flimsy, coloured-bordered saddle-cloths, which look like Brobdignagian pocket-handkerchiefs; and the goat-chaises and side-saddles remain unused in the little shed, which, with the post and hooks for the tethering of the animals, forms the establishment of the donkey-letting firm. The newly-erected iron pier shivers and trembles under the wind and sea to such an extent that you are reminded unpleasantly of the Channel transit; and when, after several duckings, you have reached the shelter of the little pavilion at its end, so strong is the illusion that you are tempted to shout for the steward. The money-taker at the turnstiles only raises his window just high

enough to receive your twopence, and lets you through with an expression of pity or astonishment. .

The temporary platform and canopy where erst the tuneful melodies of the town band were wont to swell, to the delight of the short-coated youths and long-skirted damsels, has a very woebegone appearance, and are now more suggestive of a railway turntable undergoing repairs, for which scaffolding is necessary, than of an apparatus conducive to a pleasure-seeking crowd. Were it not for the unhappy ladies' school, which takes its constitutional there three times a day, the rubicund gouty old gentleman in his antiquated spencer, the two or three strong-minded and strong-limbed spinsters who reside in the place, and the unfortunate half-dozen invalids who are drawn backwards and forwards in hermetically-sealed Bath-chairs, the esplanade would be entirely deserted.

The library and bay-windowed reading-room only take down half their shutters ; and the *annexe*, for the distribution of lottery prizes and Tunbridge-ware, is entirely closed. So also are the assembly-rooms, the votaries of Terpsichore, as 'Jeames' delights in calling them, having decamped to more genial climes. Nothing remains now to indicate that there had ever been an assembly that could by any possibility require rooms, except the dilapidated and weather-stained posters announcing the farewell appearance of those renowned artistes the 'Brothers Bomfalore,' in their 'serio-comic musical *mélange* and inimitable drawing-room enter-



tainment, called "Wig and Wisdom; or the Waltz, the Witch, and the Water-party."

The railway omnibus perambulates the parade at regular intervals, apparently for the supererogatory work of exercising the horses.

The rain-discoloured stucco-fronted lodging-houses present a piebald appearance; whilst the salt spray-drift has settled obscuringly on their windows, where an eruption of placards, bearing the ominous word 'Apartments,' has broken out in startling profusion. The owners now promote themselves from those mysterious lower-region cupboards, in which they eat, drink, and sleep during the height of the bathing-season, to the first-floor, and are to be seen at the windows, looking hopelessly for lodgers who never arrive, like Gampish Marianas in the 'moated grange.'

The only spot in this deserted village by the sea that has any remnant of life left in it is in the hotel billiard-room, where one or two lantern-jawed, unhealthy, raffish-looking men are following their doctor's advice of getting as much sea-air as possible and keeping themselves quiet by knocking the balls about, smoking cigars, and sipping 'cold pale' in the fœtid atmosphere of the gas-lighted room.

The cowering seaside shrubs and trees have barely a dozen yellowish-red leaves left upon their weatherpressed branches; and they moan and sway piteously, as in a chorus of regret for the bright days just passed, and the long dreary dulness that is before them. It is still blowing very fresh; there will be more gales,—and

see ! away to the westward portentous-looking masses of drift-cloud indicate plainly another wild night.

It is only five o'clock, and fast getting dark. We can stand it no longer—no ; another evening in this drawing-room floor will be too much for us. The cooking and attendance were not so bad when we were out all day, and came home with the appetite of a hunter ; but now that we have very little else to look to or think about for our evening's amusement, besides our dinner, it will not do. The steak will be tough and half-done, and the French beans—those everlasting scarlet-runners that are so long in season (why do not peas last as long ?) —will be sodden, cold, and over-boiled. The wretched red-handed maid-of-all-work, whom in sunny days and long evenings we almost thought good-looking, will become positively offensive to us ; that hard horse-hair sofa and corresponding upright—ironically called *easy*—chair will afford us no snooze this day ; and unless we can sleep immediately after we have dined, hopeless ennui awaits us.

No ! it is beyond endurance ; our holiday is over. So we revive the drooping spirits of the one forlorn flyman at the corner of the street—where the shuffling, hand-in-pocket, idle, semi-fisherman-looking loafers shelter themselves from the wind—by hailing him to our door, and drive off to catch the next train for London.

Once fairly on our way 'back to town,' we feel perhaps a momentary regret at leaving the snug little watering-place, where we have had on the whole rather a jolly time ; 'but in our bosom sleeps the silent

thought.' Nevertheless a railway-carriage all to ourselves gives us ample opportunity for reflecting whether it would not have been wiser a little longer to have borne those ills we had than fly to others with which we are even better acquainted. The dreary dulness of the seaside was unquestionably a bad thing, and so

‘ We go, we know not when, or why,
To smoky towns and cloudy sky,—
To things (the honest truth to say)
As bad, but in a different way.’

However, we are in for it now; the page is turned over, and we must settle ourselves with what philosophy we can muster to face the contents of the next.

So here, at last, we are back again,—back once more to the mud and fog, smoke and dirt, hurry and rattle, bother and anxiety.

Back to find a host of letters, cards, bills, notices, tax-papers, and a thousand troublesome matters which have accumulated during our absence, and which, in spite of our determination to have no letters forwarded, quietly bide their time, and assert themselves now with redoubled force from their increased number.

Back to find that our hands want washing every ten minutes, and to be conscious for the first hour or two of that peculiar London smell to which the recent sea-breezes have made our nostrils so sensitive.

Back to find that we are not expected for another week; that no preparations are made for our reception; that there is no fire, no oil for the lamp, and only the one candle by which we are met on the threshold.

Back to find that the cook whom we left in charge has gone to the play with the young person from No. 40, who had an order, leaving her niece in her place, and that consequently our only chances of dinner are at the club.

Ah! back to find the club, at least, where it stood; and though smelling strongly of paint, looking bright, inviting, and cheerful. Back to find most of the men settling into their places, and chatting pleasantly about their holiday doings over smoking-room fires, in genial little coteries. Back to hear all the news that interests us,—little enough perhaps in itself, but coming with refreshing novelty after our self-inflicted exile.

Thoughts of all this cheer us up again; and as we drive along the old familiar streets, the gas and the crowd also affect us pleasantly; the trees in the squares even look less wintry than those at the end of the esplanade. Here and there the portals of the theatres contrast agreeably in our minds with the closed assembly-rooms we have left behind us, and indicate at least the possibility of doing something if we should not find much going on at the club.

Thus by the time we arrive there our spirits have revived, and we are in that full glow of enjoyment which overtakes us for the first day or two after our return, and which, indeed, is one of the chief delights of going away at all. It soon wears off perhaps, and we sink insensibly into the old monotonous routine; but while it lasts it is no contemptible sensation, and is felt as strongly after our quiet month by the sea as

it is if we have been scampering half over the Continent.

Ask Brown, Jones, and Robinson when they have done Mont Blanc, and slept for six weeks in Swiss chalets, or under the shelter of the Grands Mulets, Point d'Aiguilles, Cols de Baume, Wetterhorns, Matterhorns, Finster-Aar Horns, Jungfraus, and all the rest of the uncomfortable localities in which the Alpinist affects to delight,—ask them, I say, which part of their trip they enjoyed the most; and if they answer you honestly, they will reply, from the time they set their faces homewards to the end of the first week after they are back to town.

The journey was pleasant enough, very likely, but the anticipation of it was even more pleasant, and the retrospect is pleasanter still. And thus it must ever be; for then the troubles, petty annoyances, and discomforts inseparable from not finding our tooth-brush in its usual place have disappeared, and nothing lives in our memory but the enjoyable part of the holiday; besides, here we are, absolutely, positively back again, which is *the* great enjoyment of all.

Yes, blissful moment, back again, here at the club, in the act of ordering dinner, where, fortunate coincidence! we find Speeder doing the same thing.

So what more natural than to dine together at the same table? Speeder, the rapid traveller, who has been to the States, and done America in six weeks, Niagara and all. Nothing easier, he says: 'Ten days out, and ten days home; three weeks or a month there—quite

long enough to see everything. When I am away, I never sleep twice in the same bed. Make it a rule; get over a lot of ground, if you only stick to that. Besides, America is one of those countries where you can't linger or loaf. See as much of it as you can in the shortest possible time, or else don't go.'

To us arrives Sloader—Sloader, the *blasé* and apathetic Sloader, who has been everywhere, and done everything, but who never talks about it, unless you make him, as you sometimes do; for he is rather fine in his observations upon men and manners.

Has he been away? 'O, yes, to Gravesend, as good a place as any other—two piers, very good hotel, and Rosherville quite handy. What more do you want? There's nothing more at any other watering-place that I have ever found; and I suppose it is a watering-place, if water has anything to do with it.'

Then there is Breachitt, who has been spending his time over the stubble and turnips, and bores your life out with statistics of every-day sport. He is going away again to-morrow, he says, to have a crack at the pheasants, and insists on our listening to a letter he has just received from the great rifle shot and deer-stalker, Pinker, who is in Ross-shire, and doing wonders amongst the stags of ten.

Cobble has been yachting—at least that is the term by which he dignifies his excursions in the Deal lugger, which he and that rising marine painter, Swirl, delight to risk their lives in, anywhere between the Goodwins and the Nore.

Barwedge likewise affects the ocean wave, and seems to think there can be no merit or pleasure in a cruise unless made in a craft under fifteen tons, of some novel and dangerous construction, with a mysterious thing called a centre-board to enable her to traverse the shallows, and with a cabin in which there is scarcely room for two fellows to lie down, and out of which half your body protrudes through the hatchway when you want to stand up—a delightful condition of things when it rains hard, or when you are continually shipping seas.

Barwedge, with Champotts and Fluker, started in this commodious but extremely tight little vessel from the river, intending to reach Paris *viâ* Havre and the Seine. They got as far as Margate, were wind-bound, they say, for a week, and spent that time in the 'Hall by the Sea;' then to Ramsgate, wind-bound again for another week, and sent up the shares of the Chatham and Dover line by their frequent transits across the Isle of Thanet back to their beloved marine terpsichorean temple. At last they reached Dover, made a short passage of ten hours to Boulogne, and eventually ran on a sandbank at the mouth of the Somme; were picked up by 'mossos,' and their boat towed to St. Valérie, where they put it on a railway-truck, and took it with themselves to the Paris Exhibition.

Intense enjoyment this! only perhaps to be exceeded by the mode Rawson Umber adopts of getting through *his* vacation—Rawson Umber, our most accomplished amateur water-colour painter, who has been living for the last three months under canvas up among

the Grampians in the midst of a deer-forest, seven miles away from the nearest habitation.

He has had a regular camp establishment there, and declares he never enjoyed himself before. It is true he admits he only had four fine days, and that it frequently rained for forty-eight hours consecutively; but then think of the fine effects; it is the only weather in which to see mountain scenery.

Well, there is no accounting for taste in this world; but personally I am inclined to think Scalva's notion of autumnal enjoyment preferable to either of these last examples—Scalva the cynic, the gloomy, and the moody; Scalva, the man who never goes away anywhere, and boasts that for the last ten years he has never slept out of his own bed, declaring that *his* holiday consists in meeting nobody about that he knows.

'You fellows go away for change and quiet,' he growls; 'and ten to one, to your great delight, half a dozen of you meet in the most unexpected places, begin to talk upon the usual matters, travel together, dine together, and frequently make a night of it together, just as if you were up in a smoking-room here. You take London, with all your fads and fancies, with you to Constantinople, to the Alps, or the Pyrenees; and you are never so happy as when you can forget for an hour or two that you are not in "the little village;" and then you call this going away for change. Why, what rot it is! Now *I* get a great deal more change by staying at home. There is nothing to do, there is nowhere to go, and for two months I scarcely see a soul

I know. There's lots of room to dine at the club, and not such a confounded crowd in the streets.

'Tradesmen are not here to dun you; and more than all, there are no hotel bills to pay. *You* say change is necessary for your health; but health mainly depends on good spirits, and most of you have the most awful sense of depression, at least for the first week that you are away, if it does not last you for the whole time. You never really "pick up" until you get back to town; and then you make a fuss and bother about your holiday being over, as if you were not deuced glad of it!'

However, anybody can see, as we have said, that Scalva is a cynic; so we leave him to grumble at our reappearance, and make further search for returned travellers; and thus by degrees we hear all about our friends.

From the Alps to the Apennines, from Niagara to the Nile, from Scotland to Sicily, from the Pyrenees to Panama, from Brighton to Bulgaria, from Syria to Scandinavia, from Gibraltar to Gravesend, or from Montreal to Margate—one and all have carried out their various predilections; and we must suppose that by shooting, fishing, touring, yachting, painting, botanising, geologising, entomologising, or idling, they have, more or less, had a good time of it—at any rate, the so-called vacation has been got through somehow.

And now we are prepared to relish thoroughly all home and sociable details, with news about forthcoming books, the changes and novelties at the theatres, the

prospects of the studios, and the generally snug and comfortable attributes which make up the chief charm of life in the 'big city.'

Whilst settling quietly down into our usual occupations and haunts with as much complacency as if we believed nothing would ever interrupt this annual going away and coming 'back to town,' if a thought arises, as it not unfrequently does, about what we will do and where we shall go next year, we had better put it aside, remembering always the philosophy that tells us, 'Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.'

THE 'BELL-BUOY.'

A Blind Man's Story.

'Look! yonder is an old ruined fort, sir; and that there dark line running from it is a groyne, or kind o' pier, like, as was built for to make the shore bank up; and the bell-buoy is rather better than a mile out to sea, just off the end of the spit of sand. You may see it plain enough—there, just where I'm pointing. Look, sir!'

'Ah! my man, it is of no use my looking, for I am blind, and cannot see an inch before me!'

'Blind! be ye, sir? Why, surely, I shouldn't ha' thought so. Your eyes look quite clear—but that's a bad thing.'

'Yes, it is. But never mind. Go on telling me all about the land and the sea; I like to hear, and can understand pretty well what they look like. I have not been blind all my life, you know. Tell me about the bell-buoy.'

'Well, sir; there's not much to tell. It's always ringing, night and day. The action of the water keeps it going. You always hears it more or less, according to which way the wind sets, and according to what sea there is on. Sometimes it only just tolls, like, as it's

doing now; but it's always ringing, for there's a strong current off there—runs fourteen knots an hour with the flood, and faster, too, sometimes. It's a dangerous place, and at low water the sands is a'most as dangerous as the tide; for they'd suck you up in five minutes. There's hundreds of poor souls lies buried there, I reckon. The craft coming up to the little river here always give the bell-buoy a wide berth.'

'It's chiefly useful in foggy weather, I suppose?'

'Yes, and at night, you know; and at all times when you can hear it and can't see; and there's a deal of fog off here, too, in the fall. It comes up of a sudden, a'most while you are speaking, sometimes in calm weather; but I could row you out to it, now, sir, if you'd like—it's a beautiful evening for a row—and then you'd comprehend, perhaps, more what sort of a thing it is. We could go close up alongside of it, with the sea as quiet as it is now.'

And so, after a little more talk, we went up close alongside it, and the rough lecture on the geography of the coast, with its landmarks; lighthouses, tides, currents, and sand-banks, was continued throughout the half-hour's pull; but the bell-buoy, and how it was laid, how the divers went down and the diving-bell was used, and how the rock beneath the sand was reached, and the ever-speaking beacon anchored safely, was the chief topic of interest. And when a boathook from the tiny row-boat held it within a yard's length, the din and booming of the bell was almost deafening, and nearly drowned the explanation of its form and struc-

ture. In snatches only was it possible to hear about its size, how it was swung, and what its four clappers looked like, and how there was a certain sort of refuge on the planking, with room for two or three men to cling, and chains to help them, if, shipwrecked on the fatal bar, they were lucky enough to reach the buoy, and that there was a little cage, or cupboard, on the top, where some biscuits and a flask of brandy were always kept, whereby the chance of saving life might be increased. It was getting late in the year now; bad weather would be coming on soon; and maybe the little stock of provisions would be of use before long.


‘Had it ever been the means of saving life?’

‘Yes, now and then; for when a gale blew dead on shore it was not always possible to hear the buoy at sea, although, of course, it rang much louder in rough weather than in calm; and many a craft in a wild winter’s night had struck and gone down with all hands, save an odd one or two who had chanced to gain the buoy. Then, when the daylight came, and the weather moderated, perhaps they could be seen from the shore and taken off. Visitors? Well, no; they hadn’t often many, for Sandholm was a poor place, without much accommodation for gentlefolk; only fishermen and the like lived there, and but few of them now, since these emigration days. The gentry from the Priory House sometimes came down and rambled about the sands; a party of them had been doing so lately a good deal. The fine evenings and moonlight had tempted them out. There were two or three rare young

madcaps amongst them, up to all kinds of tricks; and it would be well if mischief did not come of their doings some day, for they were for ever wanting to go out boating, and none of them understood much about it.'

Thus still the native lecturer, until the mainland was once more reached and the little row-boat made fast against the steps of the rough landing-place whence the expedition to the bell-buoy had started.

Vague, indeed, at the best, must be a blind man's description of locality. With the utmost difficulty only is it that he can realise the look of outer things for himself, far less put their aspect graphically before others. Hence, therefore, beyond gleaming that the land was fair and fertile, as it sloped gently down to the sea for many miles in each direction; that the village was small and very thinly populated, that it was quiet and retired to a degree, and that the air was pure and invigorating, I can tell little more about Sandholm and its neighbourhood than my sturdy kindly-spoken fisherman pilot told to me that lovely autumn evening when I, led down and left seated alone for a while upon the shore, fell into conversation with him. I heard him come to his boat hard by and begin to set some of his gear in order. Nothing else for an hour or more had disturbed the stillness of the air, save the gentle lapping of the tide over the stonework at my feet, and the one never-ceasing, half-mournful, yet melodious ringing of the bell-buoy in the distance. The sound was, as all melodious sounds are to the blind, peculiarly grateful and soothing; it harmonised



deliciously, too, with the murmuring of the tide. The perfect quiet which otherwise prevailed gave full scope for this primitive but most sweet music to travel gently across the water and to become in such transit, as all music does, doubly tender in its tone. There was, moreover, to me something especially poetical and attractive in this contrivance, speaking, as it did, of the thoughtful ingenuity of man in thus turning to account the very elements against the treachery of which its warning voice was raised to guard his fellow-creatures. A new experience, too, as it was to me of coast life, it had lured me out to some distance from the village upon a little causeway, which brought me more within the sound than any spot upon the shore.

Although I grudged the interruption to my dreamy enjoyment caused by the thuds and thumps the boatman made with his oars and spars, I hailed him, and so learned what I have had written down about the bell-buoy and its use. The seat in the stern of the little boat was snug and comfortable, and, when she had been made fast on our return, I said I would sit where I was until my guide came back for me.


‘Did I not want to go home?’

‘No; I was in no hurry.’

‘But it was getting dark.’

‘Well, that made little difference to me. How should it?’

‘No, surely, more was the pity; but was I quite certain my guide would come for me? I must be careful how I got out of the boat. Had I not better let its



owner at least help me up the steps before he went home to supper? It went against him,' he said, 'for to leave any one so helpless-like, as I must be, quite alone.'

'No, no; I would rather stay where I was. I was quite safe, and was getting used now to be alone, and preferred it sometimes. So he should go home to supper, please, and I would meet him again to-morrow, for I was going to stay, I hoped, for some time at Sandholm.'

'Well, it would be very solitary for me, for there wasn't a house nearer than a mile, nor another creature about within sight or hearing. They turned in, too, pretty soon after dark, at Sandholm, and it was doubtful whether anybody would be down again to the boats that night. However, he supposed I was the best judge; and, as the moon would be up in half an hour, my guide would have plenty of light to see to take me home by.'

And then, with many a warning and respectful 'Good-night,' my companion departed, leaving me to the solitude and quiet which I so coveted and enjoyed, and which seemed to be the only balm now which my bruised and troubled spirit could receive.

'Helpless!' Yes, that was the cry — the never-failing utterance! She had pleaded it, and most people would indorse the expression. Even this good honest fisherman here had just used it as the fittest to describe my state. This was the trial; this the blow! The shutting out of light, and with it the faces of one's friends and all the beauties of the outer world, was hard

to bear, but not so hard as this same state of dire dependence on the aid of others. This same dreadful hopeless helplessness! And she? She had had the heart to plead this as a reason—for what? For releasing me from my bond, forsooth! for finding out that she had all along mistaken a feeling of friendship for one of love; for suddenly closing to me the well-springs of her affection, upon which, months before the affliction fell upon me, I had almost lived; for closing these sources of happiness at the very moment when I stood in need of them most, and when to take them from me was to render doubly bitter and heart-breaking the resignation of all my most cherished hopes and plans. It is not to dwell needlessly here upon all this that I have it written down—it was an old story now; two years and more had passed since the fatal and mysterious curtain had gradually closed in upon me, and my sight had been pronounced as irretrievably gone—but only to hint sufficiently at the constant agony of mind which this same helplessness induced.

What galled me still more even than my affliction itself was this dependence on strangers, from the sense of which only would a wife's affection and assistance have freed me. With her love to fall back upon, strong, active, and energetic as I had ever been, I should have forgotten my bodily incapacity for exertion in the happiness of domestic life. She would have been eyes and hands for me, and in time, no doubt, I should have become resigned, if not reconciled, to my fate. Now, as it was, I fretted and raged against it. At times I was

half mad, and wildly longed for some chance—some most unlikely opportunity—to prove that I was not yet quite so useless and helpless a being after all as was supposed. At others I sank into dire despondency and blank bewilderment at the treatment I had received. It seemed impossible that the one being on earth whom above all others I had in my wild love invested with every virtue under heaven could so abandon me! The veriest stranger, and the roughest nature, as I had just now experienced, was loth to leave me quite alone; yet she had done so! This helplessness, in itself a natural pretext for tenderness, which even the untutored fisherman had recognised, she had held up as an excuse for casting me off. It was too monstrous, but it was true. Did I still love her? Well, I suppose I did, in spite of it all; the end, perhaps, will show. She was seldom out of my thoughts; but I had borne up against the double deprivation manfully, and people were good enough to say I was very brave in my helplessness—they never forgot that—and that it was quite wonderful to see how I managed for myself, and how handy I had become. The truth is, I was always tolerably handy, and, although my sight was gone, there was but little alteration in the look of my eyes, and I was not what is called stone blind; that was to come, the doctors said, if I lived long enough. I could still just barely distinguish light from darkness, night from day.

Frequently, therefore, I could move about to some extent alone in places I was accustomed to, and chose, in my increasing hermit-like tendencies, repeatedly to

be taken to some such place as a quiet garden, or, as in this case, down to the seashore, and left within a certain range, which, once knowing, I could traverse in safety. Constant as were the acts of friendship proffered on all sides, it was yet necessary for me, of course, to retain some one in my service who could at once combine the office of reader, amanuensis, and guide. A wife could have been all these to me; as it was, the right person was very difficult to find. Thus I had made frequent changes, and now had brought with me here, to my temporary out-of-the-way retreat, only a mere lad, a simple fellow, but one who served my purpose better, perhaps, in the mood I was than a more officious attendant would have done.

Here, then, I sat in the stern of the little boat, far into the evening, pondering over the one theme, and moodily enjoying the never-flagging sounds from the bell-buoy as they were borne towards me on the quiet air. I could just distinguish that the short autumn twilight had faded into night, and that the moon was rising superbly over the sea. My repeater told me that it was only a little past seven o'clock, and I had ordered the lad not to fetch me until ten. I have said I was accustomed to this *dolce far niente*, and the exceeding mildness and beauty of the weather were very favourable to the indulgence of my habit. I had smoked one or two cigars, and I suppose an hour and more had elapsed since the boatman had departed, when I heard the sound of distant laughter coming nearer and nearer. With a blind man's usual acuteness of ear, I soon dis-

covered that it was a party of people on the shore making for the little causeway at the end of which my boat lay amongst two or three others. Peal after peal of mirth ringing out, mingled with here and there a distinguishable sentence, soon enabled me to identify the young roysterers as some of the 'gentry' from the Priory, spoken of by the boatman. They were, doubtless, bent on one of the moonlight excursions to which he had referred; and of this there was no question when the foremost of the party came clattering down to the boats. My presence was evidently an unwelcome surprise, for it put a momentary check upon the conversation and led to a short consultation.

'Never mind! we can take this one; they are all tubs at the best, and I daresay there'll be room. Wheugh! 'tis rather tall of the fish, though. Come along, Georgie; stow yourself away here. Now, little one, give us your hand. How silent you are!'

Then, in an undertone which, however, did not escape me, 'Confound the fellow for taking our boat! Wonder who he is?'

Then a girl's voice broke in—'What a muff you are, Tom! There! you nearly let me slip in. I've wetted my foot as it is; and I have spoiled that lovely little rosette on my shoe, I know!'

'Did it let um spoil it's two shoes, then! Tom is a muff, everybody knows. Come to me, Georgie, next time, and I'll carry you. What a stunning moonlight night it is, and what a row that old bell-buoy is making! It sounds as if it were ringing for evening

service. Come, let us go and say our prayers! There! Now, who is going to pull? No, no! not you, Georgie, the tide will be too strong for you; you shall take an oar coming back. We'll go out and salute our bell(e) of the ocean! She must have a damp time of it on the whole. I don't think I would care to be the b(u)oy attached to that bell(e)!'

And then, with a burst of laughter at these not very original puns, and with a good deal of clatter of chains, bumping of oars, pulling and hauling, the party pushed off from the steps, and I could hear them for a long while as they rowed out in the direction of the floating beacon. As the voices grew fainter, but before they were out of earshot, I gleaned that Georgie was constantly persisting in her desire to take an oar. She insisted that Tom was still a muff, and did not know how to pull a bit; that he would upset them, and that she knew how to manage a boat better than he did. Then followed several little exclamations about being careful or they would be upset, and they must mind how they changed places; and I seemed to understand that the fast 'Georgie' at length had her way, and was indulging in her manly exercise. However this may have been, the sound of the oars in the rowlocks, as it faded entirely out of hearing, told me that the boat was now going through the water much more steadily. One's acuteness under certain circumstances becomes almost intuitive; otherwise, it would appear strange when I say that I could distinguish pretty well that the party consisted of four—two young men and two girls

—and that three of them only had spoken, she who was designated as the 'little one' having, apparently, been quite silent.

Truly, the boatman was right in suggesting that mischief might come of such inexperience amongst the dangerous shoals and quicksands abounding on that coast. I felt an undue anxiety about these foolish young people, and kept my ears for a long while on the strain to catch some further clue to their doings; but the tide was beginning to flow now, and the increased, but still gentle, lapping of it against my boat was sufficient to drown any ordinary sounds fainter than the ringing of the bell. A certain damp chilliness, too, was coming on, and I was gradually sensible of a diminution in the brilliancy of the moonlight. Suddenly the truth flashed upon me—a heavy sea-fog was rolling up fast; and in a few minutes I was enveloped in the clammy salt folds of an atmosphere, the ghostly stillness and darkness of which were sadly depressing. This, indeed, would endanger the boat. How would it manage to regain the shore? Madcaps such as its occupants were would have taken no heed of their bearings, and would not have an idea which way to steer when every vestige of the shore was shut out.

As the thought shot through my mind I listened again with my utmost power. I concentrated my whole attention, and after a while, with a thrill of horror, I heard, very faint and far off, but very distinct, in the direction of the buoy, a scream, and then another and another still louder. They rose, clearly to my sharp-

ened sense, above the never-ceasing booming of the bell, which sounded ominously like a knell as it mingled with the cries, now growing fainter and fainter. A knell, too, I felt instinctively it was to some one, and who so likely as to some one in that luckless boat? I stood up suddenly, as if with an uncontrollable impulse to action. My first idea was instantly to go forward and unmoor the boat. For a second then I forgot my helplessness; but, alas, only for a second. The consciousness of it was back upon me with redoubled force even as I moved, and I sank down again upon the seat with a sense of bitterness such as I had never experienced before. What could I do, miserable imbecile that I was? How could I assist my fellow-creatures in such a strait? The most I could do would be to shout, to scream for help like a child. I, a strong active man, was reduced to that—to call upon others to perform a part for which I had here been obviously cast, and yet I dare not stir! I was imprisoned, chained to the spot like the veriest slave!

For a moment I was frantic, and, scrambling forward over the thwarts of the boat, began to grope wildly for the painter. A sharp blow which I gave myself on my leg in this endeavour recalled me to myself a little, and again I listened with all my might; but there was nothing now to be heard except the bell, tolling slowly and solemnly, more slowly even now than ever. Yes, I must shout; that was all I could do. I was a helpless child, and I must fall back on a child's resources. Ah, but who was to hear me? I was far beyond call-

ing distance of the houses, and it would be a mere chance if any one was abroad. My stupid lad was doubtless asleep at our little inn up the village, and would not think—nay, would not dare—to come for me a minute before the appointed time. I had forbidden his ever doing so, and he would know it was as much as his place was worth to disobey me. Meanwhile, life, perhaps, was being sacrificed, and all through my helplessness. Most likely no one else had heard those agonising screams: a very fine ear only, and that strung to its full tension, could have heard them. Conscious of some terrible accident having happened as I weighed these things quickly in my mind, I shouted with all my force—shouted over and over again, until I had no voice left—and sat down, fairly exhausted at last, in the bows of the little boat. Still the same gloomy silence all around, with the one exception. I began to hate this bell-buoy now; its melody seemed gone. The fog had muffled it, and what I had heard made it sound funereal. I was beginning to think that I would try and scramble on shore, and grope my way home alone; this inaction was becoming intolerable. Anything would be better. At the worst, I should but tumble down once or twice. If I could only get up the steps, I could feel my way with my stick along the ridge of the causeway to the sand; and then, although the place was new and strange, I would trust to my instincts to put me within reach of assistance.

Yes, this was what I would do, when, in a moment,

my whole intentions were altered by a sudden change in the sound of the bell. Instead, now, of the slow measured tolling, it rang violently, unequally, and in jerks, but still violently. I listened, and there was no doubt about it. What could it be that caused it? A change of tide? No. I was sure that would not produce the action. Wind? There was not a breath. Seas rolling in? Impossible without wind. No, it was a human hand acting on one of the clappers, striving to draw attention from the land. I felt certain of this, for now and again the ringing grew fainter and fainter, as though the hand got tired, and then it was renewed fiercely, despairingly, for a while, and then it stopped entirely, only to begin again suddenly. This was not the action of the elements. With super-human strength, I once more raise a shout, but in vain. I can bear it no longer. Some one is clinging for dear life to that buoy, and his or her safety depends on what exertion I alone can make. I have the painter in my hand; I let it go, it runs through the ring to which it was made fast, and the boat gently drifts away from the steps. Too late to hesitate now, even if I think of doing so. I tear off my coat, feel for the oars, adjust them in the rowlocks, settle myself upon a thwart, and in another minute am pulling away lustily towards the buoy. Time has been when rowing and the management of a boat were my delights. What is to prevent a temporary renewal of the habit? I have only the sound to steer by, it is true, but what more would any one else have in such a fog? No, a man in full pos-

session of his sight on this occasion would be no better off than I. Nay, I may even have the advantage. Not quite helpless, then, perhaps, after all. This is my thought, the feeling that stimulates my nerve. I give way almost joyfully, and the boat flies through the calm and oily water. I have no difficulty in keeping her head straight upon the sound. It grows louder, but has resumed its regular action, yet only for a while. The hand-ringing of the bell is constantly recurring at intervals. If the way is clear before me, if I come upon no unexpected shoal, I shall reach the buoy. Two hours ago I was traversing the same tract of water. The boatman then, I am sure, made no *détour*, but pulled, as I am doing now, straight upon the sound. Not quite helpless, then, after all. Nearer, nearer. The tide is against me; a powerful current obliges me to put forth great strength, and I fancy from an increase of light that the fog is lifting. Nearer, nearer. I must be within hailing distance soon.

'Hallo, hallo!' I cry. 'Hold on! Help is at hand!'

No answer. Another vigorous effort with the oars. The bell deafens me by its proximity, as it did two hours ago. Its whirr drowns my voice, which, perhaps, cannot be heard by any one on the buoy itself. But is there any one on the buoy? The ringing is only from its natural motion now. No hand assists it. It only tolls loudly, solemnly. The boat's nose must be close. I cannot cease rowing, or she would drift away in a moment. I try to judge the distance. One more gentle pull, and her bows graze the planking. With a

fierce yell I scream out, 'Jump for your life, jump !' and again the boat touches the buoy with a heavy thump. Another wild exhortation—'If any living souls are there, let them jump for their lives; I dare not come closer.'

A momentary lull of the bell allows me to hear a faint moan, followed by a heavy splash. A second afterwards my little craft is canted violently on one side. Some one is clinging to the gunwale. I unship the oars, stretch out my arm, and, seizing firm hold of a half-helpless woman's form, drag it up over the side only just in time to prevent its frantic and convulsive struggles from upsetting the boat.

It was a fearful moment; but I had saved a human life. This delicate fragile creature, though speechless from terror and exhaustion, would live—I felt sure of that; and I had rescued her from an awful death. Not quite helpless, then, after all. But were there no other lives to be saved? With the thought I began to feel for the oars, but could only find one; the other evidently had rolled overboard, and the tide was now drifting us far away, I could hear, from the bell-buoy. It was useless, therefore, to attempt to manage the boat, or get her again near the spot with a single oar. I knew from the struggle I had had in stemming the current that it must carry us towards the land—probably towards the little river of which the boatman had spoken. I muttered a prayer of gratitude as I remembered this, and rejoiced as I became distinctly conscious of the moon once more glimmering on the water. Reluctantly

giving up, then, all idea of being of any further use, except to my companion, I devoted every effort towards restoring her to something like consciousness; and this, to my intense delight, I soon succeeded in doing. After gently and tenderly managing to place her, half-sitting, half-lying, in the bows of the boat, and wringing the water from her long loose hair, she drew a deep breath, and I doubt not, could I have seen the action, opened her eyes, for almost immediately she uttered a little wail, followed by a sort of exclamation of surprise. An unaccountable thrill of increased anxiety, not unmingled with a sense of supreme joy, beyond anything that the mere saving of life could have caused, passed through me. I did not wait to try and account for this; I accepted it, as it seemed, as a matter of course. Intuitively I felt as if it was quite natural, nothing to be wondered at, but only as something that I had earned, and that was my due. I was as cool and collected from that moment as if I had been in the full possession of every faculty; as if, indeed, I had suddenly come under the influence of a powerful restorative; for securing the oar in the stern, I began paddling or sculling the boat along with the tide, just as if I knew precisely where I was steering, or as if I could see my way.

That upon speedily reaching the land depended the full completion of my task I was well aware. A conviction that this fellow-creature whom I had saved (without a doubt the only remaining one of the four that had pushed off so gaily on the merry moonlight

excursion but so short a time ago) was destined directly to influence my future, endowed me, perhaps, with almost supernatural instincts. Anyway, the sound of the pulling of a boat and approaching voices just then breaking on my ear told me distinctly that help from the shore was on its way towards us. As clearly did I divine then, as I know now, that the long absence from the Priory of the boating party, with the sudden discovery of the fog that had come on, led to an alarm being raised and a search immediately instituted. My boatman had been pressed into the service, and, with a mate or two, soon had us in tow. Two or three more boats were despatched to the vicinity of the bell-buoy as soon as I had told my tale to the anxious and bewildered groups assembled upon the little causeway, and the still helpless though breathing form of the rescued girl had been carried away to the house.

Of little avail, however, were the weary hours spent round about the fatal quicksand. The boat even had been swallowed up; and, to make an end at once of this sad part of my narrative, I may as well say that the sole survivor afterwards explained, although vaguely, that she and her companions reached the bell-buoy just as the fog came on; that they grew alarmed at not being able to see in which direction to steer back, and determined (wisely, so far!) on remaining close to the floating beacon until the obscurity should pass away. The current, however, ran, as I had experienced, so strongly, that it required more continuous strength to keep the boat's head up to it than the rowers (one being a lady)

could put forth ; and it was whilst the poor Georgie was resigning her oar to the hapless Tom, and in again changing places with him, that they upset their rather 'cranky' craft.

Little more could be remembered after that beyond a gurgling of water mingling with wild shrieks ; the discovery that a chain had somehow been grasped and a foothold gained upon the buoy itself ; then the idea, so happily successful in its issue, of swinging one of the huge clappers to and fro in the hope of being heard on shore ; then long weary waiting, with a full consciousness of the horror of the situation, with the full consciousness of being left quite alone on that precarious and desolate refuge, with the full consciousness that the waters, having already swallowed up for ever three young lives, were eager to engulf a fourth ; then exhaustion, faintness, inability longer to continue ringing the bell ; utter despair ; scarcely arrested by the return of the bright moonlight and the disappearance of the fog. Finally, at the moment when strength was failing, and the hold upon the buoy seemed fast relaxing, came the revival of hope by the approach of my boat, followed by the desperate plunge made in the effort to gain it.

Nearly three months have passed, and there is a certain show of Christmas at Sandholm Priory. The gloom, however, which has been shed upon the house has scarcely lifted, and such preparations as are being made for the festive season are necessarily of the quietest character.

Nevertheless happiness, subdued though it may be, is not quite banished from beneath that roof. In the midst of the misery a mighty magician has been at work, and has wrought a change in one of the few intimate friends of the family there assembled which rejoices the hearts of all who see it. As she sits by the side of the blazing wood fire in the snug library, thoughtfully watching the sparks and embers as they rise and fall—quiet, staid, pale, and dressed in the deepest mourning—I am told she is scarcely recognisable as the same being who a few weeks back, light, frivolous, and vain, and arrayed in a costume of the fastest fashion, fluttered about like a gaudy butterfly. She, who then appeared devoid of almost every truly womanly attribute, and incapable of a single earnest thought or utterance, now speaks and thinks, as it were, from the depths of a soul aroused to the full consciousness of its powers of deep sympathy and love.

Yet such is the transformation effected in Marian Bridgeworth. Humbled and awakened from her apathetic dream of selfish complacency by the terrible ordeal through which she has so lately passed, she has had the moral courage to throw herself at the feet of the man she once, in a fit of caprice and thoughtlessness, so cruelly wronged, imploring his forgiveness.

Is it likely, from what he has shown in this narrative of his feelings towards her, that he hesitates, or that he fails to take her at once and for ever to his heart of hearts? No! a thousand times, no!

When, on the day succeeding the night on which he

had saved her life, he was led into her presence, and she spoke to him in the voice he on the instant recognised, he knew for the first time whom he had rescued. She had seen him as, with her companions, she came to the place where the boats lay. The moonlight fell upon him, and she scarcely believed her senses. Nay, so far from her thoughts was he at the time, and so little could she realise a coincidence so extraordinary, that she imagined, sitting silent and motionless there, that the figure was an apparition. Daunted, abashed, and conscience-stricken, her spirits fell, and she relapsed into the silent mood noticed by one of her friends as he helped her down the steps. Later on, after all was over, and when in the boat, returning consciousness for a moment revealed that face bending upon her its vacant eyes, the shock was so great that she failed to recover her power of speech, and remembered no more till she found herself once again in Sandholm Priory.

Was there, then, any further cause for wonder at that mysterious sense of happiness, that mysterious thrill of anxious joy, that shot through the frame of the sightless man as he knelt over her in the bows of his little craft, as it drifted with the tide? Did he fail to understand in the fate which took him to Sandholm, and in the coincidence which enabled him to 'lay' the haunting galling phantom of helplessness, the working of that glorious power of compensation which, if we will but only recognise it, is ever active in our behalf? Is she, too, less conscious than he of the

fact that a blind man may still be of some use in the world?

That Christmas at Sandholm Priory was not the least happy of the many I have by this time numbered.

RAMBLES IN RETROSPECT.

As the time comes round when hot pavements and crowded thoroughfares begin to suggest ideas of pleasant country trips, when overwork and late hours begin to show their effects upon the nervous system, thoughts, vague at first, but rapidly shaping themselves into definite impressions, constantly haunt us of former 'vacation rambles.' Instinctively, and almost imperceptibly, shadowy memories of bygone times of travel and excursion parade themselves before us. And as, by degrees, our most successful jaunts come prominently to the front, we endeavour to compare them, with the view of guiding our future steps. Pleasant are they, even if sometimes a little melancholy, these 'rambles in retrospect:' the tinge of sadness inseparable from them is not altogether out of harmony perhaps with our advancing years.

Fortunate indeed may we consider ourselves if we can now count upon the companionship of any amongst the most genial of those with whom we wandered in days gone by. Fortunate indeed shall it be too for us if we are able to renew, in ever so slight a degree, the zest with which we then entered upon our holiday. That old meddler, 'Father Time,' if he has not robbed

us past all reclaim of those friends we loved the best to ramble with, and if he has not as yet taken just ever so little a suspicion of the spring out of our gait, will inevitably have worked some change, which renders the prospect, as we look back, a trifle less sunny than we could wish. But sunny or sad, here come the Julys, Augusts, and Septembers of yore, trooping up, willy-nilly, with all their memories.

There is that hot evening in July when, on strictly economical principles, we started for the north of Scotland, and beginning as we meant to go on, walked in shooting-coat and wideawake, and with knapsack on back, to Euston-square, defiant of the chaff which our burden and appearance occasionally brought down upon us. 'To Perth for thirty shillings!' That, to use an expression not then invented, was our form; for, twenty years ago, the railroad penetrated no farther north in these islands than the fair city; and although the carriage we travelled in was called third-class, it was in all respects a second, and supplied, to our thinking, a less painful means of transit than did the high-flavoured cabin or deck of a London and Edinburgh steamboat. In those days we could sleep on anything except on shipboard, and so we slept till dawn broke, somewhere about Preston, and broad daylight roused us to a full sense of our position as we bowled into the station at 'bonny Carlisle.' Later on Glasgow was skirted; and finally we were landed safely, by four o'clock in the afternoon, at Catharine Glover's birthplace. A fatiguing rough-and-tumble journey, no doubt; but fleeting

glimpses that we have since caught, in traversing the Highland line, of the scenery right up to Inverness, have scarcely seemed so satisfactory as those we got from Shanks's nag on that first occasion, after our arrival at Perth.

How we scoured the neighbourhood! Clambering to elevated points, to take in a general idea of the lie of the land, and then swooping down to the windings of the Tay, for its examination in detail. The enthusiasm too with which we began our march along the great north road, past Birnam Wood, until the Tay again was crossed by the picturesque old bridge at Dunkeld; the halt here for several days; the snug quarters (not at the fashionable Athol Arms, with its town-like coffee-room, imposing waiters, and lengthy bill, but) at the humbler hostelry, with the 'gude mither' and 'bonny lassie' for hostess and attendant.

Taking our pleasure simply made it not the less pleasure, and we dived into many a recess of mountain beauty, impossible to reach and ponder over unless prepared to rough it. Pitlochrie, the neighbouring falls of Tummel, the pass of Killiecrankie, and Blair Athol, occupied a large share of our attention, and helped to fill the sheets of our note- and sketch-books; and putting up, sometimes in lodgings and sometimes at the smaller inns, for a week at a time, we stumped up the country by degrees in a most enjoyable fashion, really getting to know the people and their ways, and never finding that we were thought the less of because we emulated their own great principles of cautious ex-

penditure. They were rather flattered by our imitation, and although impossible as it now would be to remember what we had spent, by the time we had crossed the Grampians and explored the outlying spurs of the Cairngorm mountains, the field of Culloden, and reached Inverness, it is quite certain that we had done the distance for a ridiculously small sum.

The return southward by steamer on Loch Ness, with a halt at the Fall of Foyers, and so down the Caledonian Canal, with another rest at Fort William, likewise was not ruinous. We had thus far seen a very fair pick of the Highland scenery, but we did not complete our acquaintance with it until we had ascended Ben Nevis, made an excursion from Ballachulish to the gloomy evil-memored pass of Glencoe, got round to Oban, and by steamboat taken the orthodox trip to Staffa and Iona, topping up with Loch Lomond, the Trosachs, and Edinburgh. Not pleasanter in retrospect is this ramble of ten weeks than it was in fact; a thing not always possible to say, if we are strictly honest, for there is no doubt that the looking back, after a trip, is always a great part of its pleasure to the Briton.

In the same companionship, and upon precisely similar principles, a certain autumn time in Wales affords equally agreeable memories. To Chepstow by rail, thence by the windings of the Wye, past Tintern and the rest of its sylvan beauties, to Hereford; a long day's journey then on the box-seat of the mail to Aberystwith took us to the region of slate and the Cymri, and gave us the last genuine experience of a

real four-horse coach. The locomotive whistle was then never heard amongst the mountains, public vehicles and hotels were not crammed to repletion by excursionists from Leeds and Huddersfield; it was possible to trudge about in peace through the romantic scenes without having to telegraph for rooms at the next inn. It was possible to feel that we were not carrying the conventionalities of existence into every detail. Snug quarters and small charges were conspicuous at Dolgelly, Barmouth, Tan-y-bwlch, and Beddgelert; undoubted solitude could be found in the pass at Llanberis, and, as with the other notable spots where artists and the lovers of Nature most do congregate, Capel-Curig and Bettws-y-Coed offered untarnished material for study. More recent glimpses of the old places clearly show that the change is not all within ourselves. A grizzled beard, a bald head, are not responsible for railway cuttings and huge hotels scathing and defacing once rural retreats, and comparison, if to the disadvantage of these later days, is not brought about merely by a less elastic footstep.

No! the world may be as pleasant as ever for those who have never known it other than it is, but for ourselves, cynicism and gray hairs apart, rambles in retrospect go to the demonstration that there is now too much to be done, and too much to be seen, and that there are too many people everywhere for anything but the most superficial and scrambling sort of enjoyment. Nevertheless, as we continue to speculate on future travel, and, by comparison of former trips, to arrive at

reasons for turning either north or south, east or west, willing so far as in us lies to adapt ourselves to present modes and manners, holidays in direct contrast to those we spent in Scotland and Wales crop up under the influence of the rising thermometer.

There was, in that first close sight we got of the eternal snow, as, steaming down the lake of Wallenstadt, we looked up a valley straight towards Glarus, enough to stamp that tour to Switzerland and the Italian lakes as one not lightly to be thought of. True, that the edge of foreign travel had been taken off almost in our boyish days—that the costume of Boulogne or Normandy peasant-women was familiar to us, and that there was no great novelty about the general aspect of continental cities, vehicles, people, ways, and doings; true, that we had experienced a *bonâ-fide* diligence journey from Calais to Paris and back, and that we had assisted at the opening of one of the first pieces of French railway—from Rouen to the capital; true, that we had got an infinity of delight out of those comparatively circumscribed experiences; but equally true is it that the retrospect of them suggests no sensation at all equivalent to that we receive in recalling our first passage of the Splügen.

Coir, Ragatz, Thusis, how the ever-culminating grandeur slowly revealed itself to us!—almost taking our breath away! Whether, as seen in the distance—say from Berne, hardly distinguishable from infinite masses of cumuli, save by here and there a too angular or pyramidal outline—bathed in the tenderest opal-

esque haze, and blending with a sky of the subtlest gradations ; or whether seen from nearer points, jutting up in dazzling whiteness and hard-cut outline against the deepest blue, encouraging the fancy that a stone thrown from our hand would strike it, and entirely annihilating the idea that it is perhaps twenty miles away—even as the crow would fly ; or whether standing actually upon the glittering surface itself, the region of eternal snow must ever remain one of the most—if not *the* most—impressive spectacles creation affords.

Saying nothing of the crowning glory of the snow itself, its surroundings, even long before we reach it, would be in themselves enough to identify the occasion on which we first beheld them. The gorges, the precipices, the chasms, the thundering torrents, the devastating effects of their overflows, the wrenched and gnarled storm-beaten trees, the rocks, the cliffs, and the swirling mists, so mighty in their scale and splendour—whatever may have been our experience of such things in our own land, there will inevitably be quite a new emotion as we look upon them, when crossing the Alps for the first time. Rambling back in retrospect, despite our portly person and thinned locks, the heart begins to palpitate more quickly whilst we think. No omission, either, should be made of that first view of Italy, or the descent upon the Lombard plains, as we enumerate the things which strike us in our backward glance. The mere extent and range of the horizon, associated as it is too with that very curious change presented in the look of everything on the Italian side,

is sufficiently significant. The contrast of the countries, observable by a passage over any one of the great Alpine routes from Switzerland to Italy, cannot be forgotten. Go from Lucerne by the St. Gothard, for instance, to Bellinzona, and dull of observation indeed would be the man whose mind would not fasten on the change. Take the towns, churches, buildings, the villages, and the chalets, as they nestle by the borders of the lake, or in the woody nooks and on the spurs of the mighty hills; take the German names and writings, the aspect of the people, their dress, their faces, their habits, their vehicles, which we leave in the morning—set them beside the similar items amongst which we find ourselves at night, and lo! it is as if a magician had waved his rod, or a harlequin had slapped his wand!

The transformation is complete, the character of everything is altered; uncouth beams, projecting roofs, held down by huge stones, carved balconies, pink-tinted church-towers and spires, shining tin pepper-pot cupolas, grim heavy façades, have turned into glistening columns, red tiles, light iron-work, arcades and loggie, white, elegant, and exquisitely formed campaniles, and bright-coloured decorative frescoes. The 'Gast-Haus zum Schwan' becomes the 'Albergo del Cigno;' a 'Speise Vierschaft,' an 'Osteria;' the 'Strasse zum König,' the 'Strada del Rè;' and Johann Stein has turned into Giovanni Pietra. The vegetation, however, displays the necromancer's power, perhaps, more fully than anything. Trees, shrubs, and grass have all

changed. The flax-growth of Switzerland is replaced in Italy by the waving masses of maize or Indian corn, and birch and pine are represented by fig and chestnut; whilst the trim and meagre vineyards on the northern Alpine slopes scarcely suggest the same plant as that we find in its wild luxuriance, festooning from bough to bough or from column to column along the *pergole*, when we have once descended to the south. Nor can the gradual leaving of the vegetation, as we climb up through the thick woods to their scattered outskirts, and so, by the zigzag road on to the bare granite, to the lonely hospice by the gloomy tarn, be more easily forgotten than is its gradual reappearance, when, after we have skirted the glacier's edge, and perhaps crushed through the snow itself, we go thundering down at break-neck speed in close proximity to the precipice-channelled torrent.

Yes, truly, the first impressions of these things, if they cannot be reënjoyed in later life, cannot easily, we thank the Fates, be effaced.

Stand forth, then, and guide us in our wanderings to come! Point out how best we may choose a revisitation or seek on untried ground 'fresh woods and pastures new.' Have we already scoured the hills and plains of Italy or Spain, dipped a trifle into Africa or Asia, run up to Russia, Norway, or seen the midnight sun in Lapland? A recalling of the trips will surely help us in our plans for future routes. Facilities for travelling, such as never were dreamt of when we first began our autumn wanderings, have now put

almost the farthest ends of the world within reach ; a six months' holiday will take us round it, and, fairly prophesying by what has already come to pass, in another generation or two so universal will be the knowledge of this little O, that the Cook of the period must devise some plan by the 'return ticket' and *coupon* system for journeying to Jupiter or Mars, if he would provide fully for the requirements of his epoch. For ourselves? Well! having fairly 'satisfied our eyes with the memorials and the things of fame that do renown this city,' we are willing to leave our future holiday-makings pretty much to chance. What does it signify whither we go, so long as we have a pleasant and a health-restoring time? Comparing the term of life to the six weeks' or two months' holiday which we get each autumn, and reckoning a week as a decade, more than four weeks of our time are gone! Surely we are lucky if we can calculate that only half our trip is done. Eight weeks, or eighty years, is a longer spell than is usually granted; and, for our own part, we look for another fortnight as likely to bring our holiday-going days nearly to a conclusion. The corner of sixty years once turned, much locomotion becomes distasteful, and we shall be content to settle quietly down upon an easy bench under as much sunlight as is obtainable, and wait patiently for the end.

Having run through, therefore, so much of the term for which our present lodgings were taken, it seems scarcely necessary, even if things have not gone quite smoothly, to have up that old landlady, 'Mother' Time

(why not mother as well as father?), to make a fuss about the future arrangements of the frail tenement. We shall be able to 'grub on' for another fortnight or so, as we have hitherto done, and then!—the final journey, the holiday in the 'undiscovered country, from whose bourne no traveller returns.'

THE END.

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